IV

AMERICAN EXPLORERS SERIES

Early Steamboating on Missouri River

VOL. II.

KENNETT MCKENZIE

HISTORY OF EARLY STEAMBOAT NAVIGATION ON THE MISSOURI RIVER

LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

JOSEPH LA BARGE

PIONEER NAVIGATOR AND INDIAN TRADER

FOR FIFTY YEARS IDENTIFIED WITH THE COMMERCE OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY

BY

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WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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HISTORY OF EARLY STEAMBOAT NAVIGATION ON THE MISSOURI RIVER

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CIVIL WAR.

In a great many ways the War of the Rebellion affected the commerce of the Missouri River. Missouri was a slave State, and most of her citizens along the river were Southern sympathizers. It is stated that all the Missouri River pilots except two were in sympathy with the South, and that General Lyon had to go to the Illinois River for pilots when he wanted to move his troops up the river in June, 1861.

The steamboat business on the river felt the weight of the war almost immediately upon its breaking out. Most of the business was with the loyal people and was, of course, considered by the Confederates as a legitimate subject of confiscation. Guerrilla bands infested the country along the river, fired into the boats, and did all they could to break up the business.

They succeeded in driving most of the traffic off the lower river; but at the same time the demands of the war stimulated the trade higher up. There was an increased movement of government troops and stores, and in the later years of the war many refugees from both armies passed up the river to the mountains. The discovery of gold in Montana added greatly to the river commerce during these years. The injurious effects of the war, therefore, were mainly confined to the river below Kansas City.

The peril to navigation due to the operations of the guerrillas was a formidable one. Wherever the channel ran close to the high wooded banks or other sheltered localities, ambush and attack could always be expected. The danger was mainly from the south bank. It became necessary to tie up at night away from this bank, and Captain La Barge followed the practice of anchoring in mid-stream. The pilot-houses were regularly equipped with shields of boiler iron, semi-cylindrical in form, inclosing the wheel, and capable of being moved so as to be adjusted to the changing course of the vessel. These shields were of great service on the upper river also, for the Indians at this time were as dangerous in that section as were the guerrillas farther down. Occasionally, when there was much government freight aboard, troops were sent up on the boat until Kansas City was passed.

The passions aroused by this internecine strife deadened human kindness, and made men as ferocious and brutal as wild beasts. This was particularly true of the lawless bands of guerrillas whose desultory operations have been in all wars the most cruel and most difficult to suppress or control. Brigadier General Loan, of the Missouri State Militia, in reporting the tragedy which we shall next relate, said: "The guerrillas and Rebel sympathizers are waging a relentless, cruel, and bloody war upon our unarmed and defenseless citizens, and are determined to continue it until the last loyal citizen is murdered, or driven from the State for fear of being murdered." Such was the true situation along the south bank of the Missouri River, and it was only by the most vigilant precaution on the part of the steamboat men that they did not suffer more than they did. We shall relate one instance in which these precautions did not avail.

In the latter part of March, 1863, the steamboat *Sam Gaty* was on her way up the Missouri with a heavy load of freight and passengers, bound for the far upper river. There were on board several persons of wealth on their way to the newly discovered gold fields of Montana. There were besides quite a number of paroled Union soldiers and some forty contrabands, as the negroes freed by the war were called. While passing under a high wooded bank near Sib-

ley, Mo., the boat was attacked by a band of guerrillas under the leadership of one Hicks, who had for some time been the terror of the surrounding country. The boat was ordered to come to the bank and promptly obeyed, whereupon the guerrillas immediately boarded her. The attack was unexpected, and the passengers were seated around the cabin engaged in games and conversation when the appalling fact of their situation dawned upon them. A rush was made to conceal valuable property, and the paroled soldiers made haste to get into citizens' clothes. The poor negroes could do nothing. The guerrillas made quick and heartless work. They robbed the passengers of all the valuables to be found on their persons, and one man narrowly escaped summary death for attempting to slip his gold watch into his boot. All the property on board that seemed to be of any use to the government was thrown into the river. The safes were broken open and robbed. Some of the paroled soldiers were taken off the boat and shot. All of the contrabands were driven ashore, where they were shot down in cold blood. Their shrieks and cries were plainly heard on the boat. After this attack the boat was allowed to proceed.

Vengeance followed quickly in the wake of this atrocious crime. A body of Kansas troops under a Major Ransom pursued and overtook the guerrillas,

attacked and destroyed their camp, took twenty-one horses, killed seventeen men in combat and hanged two, and completely dispersed the organization.*

Captain La Barge had his full share of troublesome experiences that followed the outbreak of the war. As a slave-owner in a small way, and as a man born and bred in the old ante-bellum atmosphere that surrounded the institution of slavery, his natural sympathies were with the South. But when it came to a decision he did not hesitate a moment. As between union and disunion he was for union. It required a degree of self-denial and patriotism which many Northerners have never fully appreciated to stand by the country when one's training and natural sympathies would have led him to the other side. Captain La Barge remained a Union man, took the oath of allegiance, and throughout the war rendered constant service to the government. He soon came to see the wisdom of his decision, and before the war was over his sympathies had swung into full line with his action.

In 1861 Captain La Barge was coming down the river on the *Emilie* from Omaha, and, as usual, stopped at St. Joseph for freight and passengers. A

* The fact of this attack on the *Sam Gaty* has been questioned by some; but there would seem to be no doubt of its truth in all essential details.

good many people got on board, most of them Southern sympathizers going south. When the boat rounded out into the stream the passengers went up on deck and cheered for Jefferson Davis. The news of this event was telegraphed to Colonel R. D. Anthony of Leavenworth. This distinguished agitator and ardent Union man called a meeting of the citizens, and it was decided to hang La Barge the moment the boat arrived. The Captain had a stanch friend in Leavenworth of the name of Alexander Majors, of the firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell, overland freighters. He was waiting to take passage to his home in Lexington, Mo. When the boat approached there was a great crowd on the levee. The instant the prow touched the bank Majors leaped on board and told the Captain not to make fast, as the crowd proposed to hang him. The Captain asked the clerk what business they had for Leavenworth. He replied that there were only a few bills to collect. "Let them go for now," said the Captain, and tapping the bell to depart, drew back into the stream. When the crowd saw that they were outwitted, they swung their rope into the air and yelled that they would get him at Wyandotte. "All right," replied the Captain, "I expect to stop

* Brother of Susan B. Anthony, and at the present date editor of the Leavenworth *Times*.

there," but when he reached that place he kept right on.

On one of the down trips in the season of 1861 the *Emilie* arrived at Boonville just as the Confederates were evacuating that place upon the approach of the Federals under General Lyon. La Barge knew nothing of what was transpiring there, and his first intimation of any unusual state of things was a volley of cannon shot whistling over the boat. The Captain signaled that he would halt, and rounded to above the town. The Confederate General Marmaduke came on board and with him Captain Kelly and a company of troops. "I knew Marmaduke well," said La Barge, "and asked him as soon as he got on board what the matter was. He replied, 'I want you to turn around and take General Price up to Lexington. He is sick and cannot stand the overland ride.' I replied that I could not think of such a thing; that I was in the service of the government. He then took possession of the boat, placed me in arrest, and forced me to take the boat back to Lexington. I protested again, saying that the crew would look to me for pay for this extra work, and the government would hold me responsible for failure to fulfill my contract. Marmaduke replied, 'I will pay you every cent you have to disburse on account of this trip.' After Price came on board Marmaduke left, and we

then steamed up to Lexington, where the boat was turned over to me and I was told to shift for myself. I suppose they thought I ought to consider myself fortunate to get off at all. They never paid me anything, although they might easily have done so, for the first thing done upon landing at Lexington, as I was told, was to sack all the banks of that town. As to my getting away, that was far from being a matter of much satisfaction. It was, of course, known in the Federal lines that I had carried Price up the river. How should I answer for myself upon my return? I went to Price, told him the dilemma I was placed in, and asked him to help me. He gave me a very strong letter, stating that I had acted under duress, and had been forced to go back against my repeated protest.

"It was with no slight misgivings that I turned the *Emilie* downstream and started in the direction of Boonville. I knew that there was trouble in store for me. When I approached the Federal lines a volley was fired at the boat, apparently with the definite purpose of hitting her. I promptly rounded to and the firing ceased. A young Lieutenant by the name of White came on board with a guard of a dozen men to arrest me. I had known White in St. Louis as a commission clerk, a young man of no account, but who, having now some authority, felt disposed, like

all inferior men, to exercise it with a severity in inverse proportion to his ability. He doubtless thought it a great feather in his cap to have as prisoner a man who would scarcely have deigned to notice him in any other situation. He was insolent and arbitrary, and lunging his sword toward me, would order me to walk faster. I was taken to General Lyon's quarters, and when in that officer's presence, he said to me: 'You are in a very bad scrape here, sir.' I took Price's letter from my pocket and handed it to him, saying, 'General, please read that; it may help to straighten matters out.' He read the letter, but pretended not to think much of it. After hemming and hawing over the matter for a while he said: 'Do you know anyone here who can tell me who you are?' He knew very well who I was, for he had been with Harney in the Sioux War of 1854-55 and we had met then. I asked him to name the members of his staff, and I could tell. He finally mentioned Frank Blair. I said with some irony, 'I know Frank Blair very well, and I think *he* knows me.' We then walked up to Blair's quarters. He shook hands cordially and said, 'I understand that you are in a bad fix here.' 'It looks like it,' I replied. 'Rather be at home than here, I presume,' he continued jokingly. 'Much rather,' I replied. Lyon showed Blair Price's letter. They consulted

together for a little while and Lyon then said to me, 'You can take possession of your steamboat and go home.' I found the boat in Lyon's fleet where it had been taken, and all of her provisions confiscated. I was not long in getting up steam, and left the inhospitable region with the utmost expedition.

"I did not like Lyon. He was a Yankee, and his disposition seemed to be to crush everyone who did not think as he did. His language and bearing toward me were so insolent and exasperating that they left a lasting rancor in my mind.*

"This affair cost me about five thousand dollars, although I was partially reimbursed for the stores taken. I did not go up the river again that season, being too much vexed and disgusted with my late experience. I sent the boat up under charge of a man of the name of Nick Wall, who ran her until my government contracts were completed."

In the year 1862 Captain La Barge was again impressed temporarily into the service of guerrillas. On October 16 of that year a body of Confederates was at Portland, Mo., when the steamboat *Emilie*

*This was the opinion naturally held by Southern sympathizers in Missouri. The unbending will of this stern and ardent patriot would overbear and crush without compunction anyone who had even a taint of disloyalty about him. Though La Barge had taken a stand which was quite as honorable, and more self-sacrificing than that of Lyon, still the latter could not

came along. The *Emilie* stopped to put two men ashore, when a gang of Rebels concealed behind a woodpile took possession of the boat and compelled Captain La Barge to set them across the river. He was forced to unload his deck freight and take on 175 horses and as many men. Scarcely had they started across when a force of Union cavalry of the Missouri State Militia arrived, but not in time to arrest the operation.

These were the only occasions on which Captain La Barge had trouble on the river on account of the War. Like all other boatmen, he welcomed the close of this conflict and the tranquillity which it brought to the river business.

There was an organization in the military establishment of the United States, growing out of the progress of the war, of which very little is known. It was called the United States Volunteers, and consisted of six regiments and one independent company. It was composed chiefly of deserters from the Confederate army and prisoners of war who had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States.

forget that the Captain's environment and training had made him more sympathetic with the Southern cause than a Northerner could possibly be. Lyon's temperament, moreover, aggravated the severity of his patriotism. He was not popular with his associates in the old army on account of his overbearing disposition.

These troops served continuously on the Western plains and in the Northwest, except the 1st and 4th regiments, which served mainly at Norfolk, Va. On the Missouri River, and perhaps elsewhere, they were commonly spoken of as "Galvanized Yankees." In 1864, when Fort Rice was established near the mouth of the Cannon Ball River, it was garrisoned by the 1st Regiment of U. S. Volunteers under Colonel Charles A. R. Dimon. This officer was one of the remarkable characters of Missouri River history, and made a great impression along the valley, considering his brief service there. He was the particular bugbear of the traders, and the character which they have given him can be best expressed by spelling his name with an "e" in the first syllable. It was said that he ordered his men shot down on the least provocation, and that many of the regiment were slain in this way. Numbers of his men are said to have deserted through fear of his tyrannical and ungovernable temper. One of the traders has left a record of his own special grievance.

In the winter of 1864-65, as already stated, the American Fur Company sold out to the Northwestern Fur Company, more commonly known as the firm of Hawley & Hubbell. In the following spring these two gentlemen went up the river with Mr. C. P. Chouteau on the American Fur

Company boat, the *Yellowstone,* to make the transfer of the posts and property. There were many passengers of different political creeds on board, including a number of ex-Confederates. At a point about one hundred miles above Fort Sully news of Lincoln's assassination was received, and the passengers of all shades of opinion expressed their horror of the event. When the boat arrived at Fort Rice, Colonel Dimon, according to this authority, came down to the boat with a large guard of soldiers and placed the whole party under arrest on the charge of jubilating over the assassination of the President. The traders thought the whole proceeding was a scheme of Colonel Dimon to advertise his intense loyalty. He told Chouteau, whose Southern proclivities were well understood along the river, that he would take him out on the bank and shoot him like a dog. Chouteau was thoroughly frightened and trembled like a leaf, for there was no knowing what the impetuous officer might take a notion to do.

Hubbell and Hawley determined to go down to Sioux City and report to General Sully the detention of their boat and the conduct of Colonel Dimon toward themselves and others. Chouteau gave them a yawl and wrote a letter to the General. Dimon ordered them not to go without first reporting to him. Although his authority to give such an order

is doubtful, the men did not dare to disobey for fear of being shot. When they appeared they were required to submit all their letters to his inspection. The particular letter he was after was one he believed Chouteau had written, but Hubbell and Hawley had slipped it into the breech of a Henry rifle and left it in the boat. Finally they were permitted to go. They made a rapid trip, partly by river and partly by land, and immediately reported their grievances to General Sully. The General promptly gave them a written order to Colonel Dimon to release their boat. Armed with this they returned to Fort Rice by the steamer *G. W. Graham*, and in an incredibly short time, considering the distance and mode of travel, appeared before Colonel Dimon. General Sully's order eased matters up somewhat, but still the traders had a good deal of trouble with the irate post commander.

How much there was in the stories about Colonel Dimon is doubtful, but probably about an equal mixture of fact and fiction. Certainly the view of the traders concerning him was not shared by General Sully, if we judge from the following extracts from his own correspondence with General Pope. Writing from Sioux City under date of June 10, 1865, he says:

"I admire his energy and pluck, the determination

with which he carries out orders; but he is too young —too rash—for his position, and it would be well if he could be removed. He is making a good deal of trouble for me, and eventually for you, in his over-zealous desire to do his duty. . . His regiment was raised and organized by Ben. Butler, and he is too much like him in his actions for an Indian country, but he is just the sort of a man I would like to have under me in the field." Upon his arrival at Fort Rice a month later he thus commented upon Colonel Dimon:

"I am much pleased with the appearance of this post and the way military duty is performed. Colonel Dimon is certainly an excellent officer. A few more years of experience to curb his impetuosity would make him one of the best officers in our volunteer service."

Pope in the meanwhile authorized Sully to take such action in regard to Colonel Dimon as he saw fit. A board of officers was convened to investigate complaints against him, and on the strength of their report he was relieved July 21, 1865. He resumed command of the post, however, October 10, 1865, but was mustered out of the service on the 27th of the following month. He was subsequently brevetted Brigadier General of Volunteers for gallant and meritorious service during the war.

Colonel Dimon probably showed an excess of severity toward the traders where the average officer showed far too little. That explains their chief ground of dislike of him. Add to this the "impetuosity" of temperament referred to by General Sully, and we have a pretty close analysis of a situation which caused a great flurry on the Missouri River in its day. As a matter of fact a great many of the men in the 1st Volunteers died at Fort Rice, but from disease, and not by execution under Dimon's order. A number of men did desert, and seventeen of them walked all the way to Fort Union. One of these men made a pen drawing of that post which is probably the most accurate now in existence.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOLD IN MONTANA.

If the Civil War operated to drive commerce from the lower Missouri River, other forces were at work at the head waters of that stream to multiply it many fold. At the time when the attention of the nation and of the world was centered on the tempest that had burst over the eastern portion of the Republic, a few hardy miners were prospecting the country around the upper tributaries of the Missouri in their ever-restless search for gold. It is a singular fact that the gold-bearing regions of western Montana, the very first in the mountain country to be extensively frequented by white men, should have been the last to give up the secret of their hidden wealth. For nearly twenty years emigration had been pouring into the West. The Mormons had settled a few hundred miles to the south. Settlement had gained a permanent foothold on the Pacific Coast from Mexico to the British line. The Pike's Peak gold discoveries were rapidly filling up Colorado. The

reflex wave of emigration was rolling back from the Pacific Coast across the Sierras and the Cascades into Nevada, eastern Oregon, and Idaho. But as yet there were no settlers to speak of in the mountains of Montana, and that country was still practically unknown to the general public. It is a remarkable fact that a section of country in that neighborhood, which is now considered the most wonderful in the world, was the very last of all the national domain to be discovered and explored.

The wave of gold discovery in the Northwest moved from the west toward the east. In 1860-61 it made known the rich deposits in Idaho on the Salmon and Clearwater rivers. Next came the findings just west of the Continental Divide, and then the rich discoveries on the head waters of the Missouri. The existence of placer deposits within the limits of the present State of Montana had been asserted as early as 1852. A Canadian half-breed of the name of Beneetse is said to have found pay dirt in that year on a small tributary of Deer Lodge River, one of the sources of the Columbia. The stream has since been known as Gold Creek, and the place of discovery is about fifty miles northwest of the modern city of Butte. Four years later, 1856, the discovery was confirmed by a party who were traveling from Great Salt Lake to the Bitter Root Valley. In the

same year a man turned up at Fort Benton with what he asserted was golddust. He came from the mountains in the Southwest, most likely from the Deer Lodge Valley. None of the people at the post were gold experts, and they hesitated about receiving the dust; but Culbertson finally took it on his own responsibility, giving for it a thousand dollars' worth of merchandise. Next year he sent it down the river, and it was found to be pure gold, worth fifteen hundred dollars. This was the first exchange of golddust in Montana.

The next step in the progress of discovery must be credited to James and Granville Stuart, two of Montana's most distinguished pioneers. They had been spending the winter of 1857-58, with a number of other people, in the valley of the Bighole River, a tributary of the Missouri, and in the spring of 1858 went over to the Deer Lodge Valley to investigate the reported findings on Gold Creek. They remained there for a time and found paying prospects, but were so harassed by the Blackfeet Indians that they were compelled to leave. They moved to a safer locality, but here James Stuart met with an accident which came near proving fatal, and the two brothers left the country and went to Fort Bridger. Although they had made no great discovery, their report was considered as confirming those already

made of the existence of gold in the Deer Lodge Valley.

Before these prospects were any further developed attention was wholly diverted to the important discoveries in Idaho already referred to. A great stampede to the Salmon and Clearwater rivers began. Emigrants poured in both by way of Salt Lake and the Missouri River, and an even larger inflow came from the Pacific Coast. But before the rush from the East had gathered full force discoveries in Montana arrested its course and held it permanently in a new and greater Eldorado.

In the winter of 1861-62 a considerable floating population, among them the Stuart brothers, remained in the Deer Lodge Valley. The Stuarts commenced sluicing in a systematic way on Gold Creek, and their work was the beginning of the gold-mining industry in Montana. Although nothing particularly remarkable was found, it was enough to attract attention, and reports soon got abroad that the findings were very rich. The greater part of the emigration from the East in the year 1862 was bound for the Idaho mines, but did not get beyond the Deer Lodge Valley, or other points in western Montana. Among these parties was one from Colorado, including J. M. Bozeman, for whom the town of Bozeman, in the beautiful Gallatin Valley, is named. The new-

comers made a rich discovery on a branch of Gold Creek, which was named, from the place whence the party came, Pike's Peak Gulch.

Another party from Colorado, bound for the Idaho mines, were deflected north by the difficulty of getting through the Lemhi Mountains and by favorable reports from the Deer Lodge Valley. Two of their number discovered gold on Grasshopper Creek, in the southwestern corner of the present State of Montana. They carried the news to the main party, who had gone on to the Deer Lodge, and all returned to investigate the discovery. The report of the two men was found to be true, and prospecting in that part of the country was carried on extensively. This work resulted in the finding of a very rich deposit by a party under one White, for whom the spot was named White's Bar. Here the town of Bannock sprang up, and before the end of the year boasted a population of five hundred souls. Other rich discoveries were made in that vicinity, while far to the north the deposits on the Big Prickly Pear Creek were found. It was now apparent that the whole country on the head waters of the Missouri abounded in gold, and the work of prospecting assumed enormous proportions.

Two other important expeditions came from the East this season, bound for the Idaho mines, but

were stopped in their course, like that from Colorado, by the new discoveries in Montana. One of these was the firm of La Barge, Harkness & Co. of St. Louis, and the other was a body of emigrants who accompanied what was known in its day as the Northern Overland Expedition from St. Paul. This expedition was of a semi-official character, under a Federal appropriation of five thousand dollars, and its ostensible object was to open a wagon road from St. Paul to Fort Benton. It was under the command of Captain James L. Fisk, who, a private soldier in the 3d Minnesota Volunteers, was appointed Captain and Quartermaster and placed in charge. About 125 emigrants accompanied the expedition. The journey was made in safety, and was full of interesting happenings. It contributed one of the most important additions ever made to population of the rising State.*

The spring of 1863 was marked by one of the most noted gold discoveries ever made. During the

* Fisk repeated the expedition several times. It virtually amounted to emigration at government expense. The military authorities did not think much of either Fisk or his scheme, and officially denounced both. Thus General Sully, September 9, 1864: "Why will the goverment continue to act so foolishly, sending out emigrant trains at great expense? Do they know that most of the men that go are persons running away from the draft?"

previous winter a considerable party, under the leadership of James Stuart, was organized at Bannock City, to explore and prospect the country on the sources of the Yellowstone. A portion of this party, including William Fairweather and Henry Edgar, went by the way of Deer Lodge Valley to secure horses, having fixed on the mouth of the Beaverhead River as the place of joining the main party. Through some unavoidable delay the smaller party did not arrive on time and Stuart went on without them. The Fairweather party discovered Stuart's trail and made forced marches to overtake him. The route lay up the Gallatin Valley and across the divide to the Yellowstone, and thence down the valley of that stream. Soon after reaching the Yellowstone the smaller party were plundered by a band of Crows of everything except their guns and mining tools. The Indians had the generosity to give them in exchange for their mounts old broken-down horses of their own.

The party gave up their pursuit of Stuart and started back for Bannock City. On the 26th of May they stopped for noon on Alder Creek, a little branch of one of the main tributaries of Jefferson Fork of the Missouri. Here, as a result of a chance examination of a bar by two men, Fairweather and Edgar, the famous Alder Gulch discovery was made, and the

richest placer deposit in the history of gold mining came to the knowledge of the world. The news of this wonderful discovery drew to the spot a large part of the population of the Territory, and the town of Virginia City sprang up as if in a night. For several years it was the principal town in the Territory and became its first capital. In less than two years it had grown to a city of ten thousand souls.

The next important discovery was made in the fall of 1864, in what was named at the time Last Chance Gulch. The deposits were very rich, and the history of Alder Gulch was re-enacted here. The town which arose on the spot was named Helena, and soon outgrew its sister to the south. It became, and for many years remained, the principal town of the Territory. In 1874 it was made the Territorial capital, and after Montana was admitted to the Union, it was made the permanent capital of the State.

Other discoveries followed those here mentioned, many of them rich and of permanent value, but none equaling those of Alder and Last Chance gulches. The Territory at once took rank with California and Colorado as a gold-producing territory, and has held its high place ever since.

The mighty metamorphosis which, in the space of five years, came over the country at the head waters of

the Missouri, produced an equally marvelous change in the commercial business of that stream. The river gave a sure highway for travel to within one hundred to two hundred miles of the mines. There was no other route that could compete with it, for this could carry freight from St. Louis to Fort Benton, in cargoes of one to five hundred tons, without breaking bulk. The emigrants themselves went in large numbers by overland routes, but a great number also by the boats; while nearly all merchandise, including every necessary of life, and all mining machinery and heavy freight, came by the river.

The steamboat trade jumped suddenly to enormous proportions. Prior to 1864 there had been only six steamboat arrivals at the levee of Fort Benton. In 1866 and 1867 there were seventy arrivals. The trade touched high-water mark in 1867, and at this time presented one of the most extraordinary developments known to the history of commerce. There were times when thirty or forty steamboats were on the river between Fort Benton and the mouth of the Yellowstone,* where all the way the

* In 1866 the *Deer Lodge*, which left Benton about May 20, met the following boats on her way down: *St. John* and *Cora* at Fort Benton; *Waverly* at Eagle Creek; *Mollie Dozier* and *W. J. Lewis* at Fort Galpin; *Marcella* at Fort Charles; *Big Horn*, above Big Muddy; *Only Chance* 30 miles below Union; *Favorite*

river flowed amid scenes of wildness that were in the strictest sense primeval. To one who could have been set down in the unbroken wilderness along the banks of the river, where nothing dwelt except wild animals and wilder men, where the fierce Indian made life a constant peril, where no civilized habitation greeted the eye, it would have seemed marvelous and wholly inexplicable to find this river filled with noble craft, as beautiful as any that ever rode the ocean, stored with all the necessaries of civilization, and crowded with passengers as cultured, refined, and well dressed as the cabin list of an ocean steamer. What could it all mean? Whence came this handful of civilization and what brought it here? Certainly a most extraordinary scene, flashed for a moment before the world and then withdrawn forever.

It was not the steamboat alone, however, that

and *Ontario* 70 miles below; *Tacony* and *Iron City* 130 miles below; *Amelia Poe* and *Walter B. Dance* near White Earth River; *Jennie Brown*, *Peter Balen*, and *Gold Finch* in Big Bend; *Miner* below Fort Clark; *Luella* above Fort Rice; *Helena* at Fort Rice; *Tom Stevens* 40 miles below Fort Rice; *Huntsville* at Grand River; *Lillie Martin* at Island below Grand River; *Sunset* 20 miles below Swan Lake Bend; *Agnes* at Devil's Island; *Ned Tracy* and *Mary McDonald* above Big Cheyenne; *Marion* 30 miles above Fort Sully; *Jennie Lewis* above Pierre; *Gallatin* below Fort Sully; *Rubicon* at Cadet Island; *Lexington* above Great Bend; *Montana* below Crow Creek; and *Ben Johnson* at Bon Homme Island.

made up the romantic history of Missouri navigation in these exciting times. There were every year many men from the mines who wanted to return to the States because they were weary of the country or wished to carry down the crude wealth which they had secured. The steamboats came up only in the spring, and if passengers were not ready to go down it was necessary to seek other conveyance. The usual resource in such cases was the mackinaw boat. It was a perfectly comfortable and very cheap mode of traveling, with only one drawback—danger from the Indians, who, at this time, were intensely hostile all along the river. It was regarded as a sort of forlorn hope to go down in an open boat, and yet many tried it every year. Generally they got through all right, with their precious freight, but there were some terrible tragedies as the penalty of such reckless daring.

Some statistics have survived showing the magnitude of the steamboat business on the Missouri River during these years. In the year 1865, 1000 passengers, 6000 tons of merchandise, and 20 quartz mills went to Fort Benton. In the year 1867 forty steamboats had passed Sioux City before June 1 on their way up the river. They carried over 12,000 tons of freight, most of it for Fort Benton. There was not much downstream traffic, although all the boats

carried golddust. In 1866 one boat, the *Luella,* had on board $1,250,000 worth of dust.

The profits of a successful voyage were enormous. The reported profits for some of the trips of 1866 were as follows: The *St. John,* $17,000; the *Tacony,* $16,000; the *W. J. Lewis,* $40,000; the *Peter Balen,* $65,000. In 1867 Captain La Barge cleared over $40,000 on the trip of the *Octavia.*

Freight rates from St. Louis to Fort Benton in 1866 were 12 cents per pound. Insurance rates were 6 1-2 per cent. in the case of sidewheel boats and 8 per cent. with sternwheel boats. The fare for cabin passengers was $300. It was not everyone, however, who had a share in the high prices of those times. The master of the boat received $200 per month; the clerk $150; the mate and engineer each $125. The pilot was the only member of the crew who could command what salary he pleased. So indispensable were his services that as high as $1200 per month was paid for the best talent.

CHAPTER XXIII.

INCIDENTS ON THE RIVER (1862-67).

In the summer of 1863 a party of twenty-one men and three women went down the Missouri in a mackinaw boat from Fort Benton. They reached the vicinity of the mouth of Apple Creek, near where Bismarck, N. D., now stands, just as the Sioux Indians, whom General Sibley was driving out of Minnesota and across the country to the Missouri, arrived on the banks of that stream. They had just been defeated in three engagements with General Sibley and were in a very angry temper. They attacked the boat and fought the little party an entire day, and finally killed them all and sunk the boat. It was reported that the whites killed ninety-one Indians in the fight, and that the captain of the boat, whose name is supposed to have been Baker, "made such a brave defense that the Indians were struck with admiration for him and wanted to save him." The boat had a large amount of golddust on board, and some of it was recovered by the Mandan and Aricara Indians. An air of mystery has always hung over

this affair, and the details will probably never be known. For some unexplained reason, certain individuals who were believed to have had some knowledge of it refused to disclose anything.

In 1864, while Captain La Barge was at Fort Benton, a number of miners applied to him to purchase a mackinaw boat. He refused to sell because he felt sure that it meant death to them to try to run the gantlet of the Indians in that way. They replied that they were afraid to go overland on account of road agents. The Captain told them they had less to fear from road agents than from Indians. The road agents might take their gold, but the Indians would spare neither treasure nor life. They were unconvinced, however, and as the Captain would not sell the boat, they stole it and set out. While passing a high cut bank, about thirty miles below Fort Berthold, where the channel ran close to the shore, they were attacked by a war party of Sioux and all killed. Pierre Garreau, the well-known interpreter, went down from Berthold and recovered a part of the golddust. La Barge saw some of it among the Indians the following year.

In 1865 the steamer *St. Johns*, on her way down the river, was attacked by the Indians and the mate instantly killed. The boat was under full headway and out of reach before it was possible to return fire.

In the same year the *General Grant* lost three men. They had been sent ashore at a wooding place to make fast a line, when they were pounced upon by the Indians and killed.

On April 23, 1865, a band of Blood Indians near Fort Benton stole about forty horses belonging to a party of beaver-trappers, of whom Charley Carson, a nephew of "Kit" Carson, was one. On the night of May 22 these men, having gotten on a drunken spree, attacked a small party of Blood Indians who happened to be near Fort Benton, but were not known to be the thieves, killed three, and threw their bodies into the Missouri. The survivors fled toward the south and met a large band of warriors near Sun River, on their way north. Exasperated at the outrage upon their brethren, they were ready for any measure of revenge, and accident soon threw the desired opportunity in their way.

At the mouth of the Marias River lay the steamboat *Cutter*. A town site had been laid off at this point and named Ophir, and some timber had been cut in the valley of the Marias for use in the erection of buildings. The principal proprietor of the nascent village was a passenger on the *Cutter*, and the business of that boat seems to have been connected with the building of the town. On the afternoon of May 25, about half-past two o'clock, eight men left the

boat with a wagon and three yoke of oxen to bring down some of the timber, and an hour later two men went on horseback to join them, for it was felt that there might be trouble from the Indians, and that the party should be as strong as possible. These men were all well armed. Their route lay up the valley of the Marias along its right bank, which they ascended about three miles. At this point the valley, which was quite broad below, narrowed to a width of four hundred yards. There was a growth of timber quite dense close to the river, but open farther back. Just above this point the bluffs crowded close upon the river, seamed with ravines and gullies, like all the river bluffs along the Missouri. The roadway at the foot of these bluffs was very narrow.

Beyond this defile the valley opened out again, and there was another belt of timber. In the upper opening the Indians seem to have been in camp and to have been discovered by the wood-choppers just as the latter were passing the defile. It was probably the same band which we have noted as being near Sun River two days before. The wagons were instantly turned about, although in a most disadvantageous situation. The Indians saw the whites at about the same time. They were lying in wait for another party with a mule train, and were intending, after attacking it, to try to take the steamboat. As

soon as they saw the wood-choppers they at once attacked them and killed every man and captured all the property. The bodies of the slain were found scattered along the river, fifty to one hundred yards apart, except one, that of N. W. Burroughs, which was found half a mile further downstream, where he was overtaken on his flight to the boat. Of the Indians the head chief and one other were killed and a third dangerously wounded. The Indians, to the number of about two hundred, immediately moved toward the British line.

The attack occurred about four o'clock and the firing was distinctly heard on the boat. A party prepared to go out and investigate when a hunter came riding in from the bluffs, saying that the whites were being assailed by a large party of Indians. Three scouts set out immediately, and after proceeding about two miles and a half found the body of Mr. Burroughs. It being certain that all the rest had been killed, and not knowing where the Indians were, it was not thought best to go farther at the time. Next morning a party went out with wagons and brought in the bodies, all of which were found. They were buried in one grave, side by side, with a head board giving the names and date.*

* The names were N. W. Burroughs, George Friend, Franklin Friend, Abraham Low, James H. Lyons, Harry Martin, Frank

Captain La Barge arrived at the mouth of the Marias on the *Effie Deans* soon after this affair and saw the fresh graves. He remembered the circumstance particularly, because, among the guard, which had been stationed there after the massacre, was the identical "Yankee Jack" who had whipped the two Irishmen on the *Robert Campbell* in 1863.

About September, 1865, eight men left Fort Benton in a skiff for the States. They were attacked by some forty Indians near the mouth of Milk River and five of their number were killed. The fight lasted over five hours. One of the men who was killed, T. A. Kent by name, is said to have actually killed thirteen Indians before he himself fell.

In the year 1866 there were several noted open-boat voyages down the river. One of these was made by a party of ten miners, who purchased a mackinaw at Fort Benton in which to transport themselves and their golddust. When in camp on an island about sixty miles above Fort Randall, one of the men, of the name of Thompson, got up in the night, took an ax, killed one companion and wounded another. He was apparently bent on the destruction of the entire party. The rest of the men, suddenly awakened by the cries of their comrades, and believing that they

Angevine, George Allen, James Andrews, and James Perie (colored).

were attacked by Indians, rushed to the boat with the wounded man and made off, leaving the murderer and his victim alone on the island. Whether robbery was the motive of the deed, or whether it was caused by insanity, was never known.

More fortunate was another mackinaw party that went down the same season. It consisted of seventeen men, and made the trip from Fort Benton to Sioux City in twenty-two days. They brought down over two hundred thousand dollars in golddust.

The third party of this season consisted of one man in a yawl and about twenty others in a mackinaw. They made the entire trip without loss, although they were attacked, some 225 miles below Benton, by about five hundred Blackfeet. The river was in flood stage, and thanks to its great width and swift current the boats were able to keep out of range of the Indians and to pass quickly beyond their reach.

The most important mackinaw trip ever made down the river was in 1866 under the leadership of J. B. Hubbell of the firm of Hawley & Hubbell. Hubbell had advertised that his steamboat would leave Fort Benton on her second trip about September 15, promising, if she did not get to Fort Benton, to take the passengers down in a mackinaw until they met her. As late as October 20 she had not appeared, and accordingly about thirty passengers started down

in a mackinaw. The boat was a very elaborate one, built for this particular trip. It was eighty feet long, twelve feet beam, housed in on both sides by bullet-proof walls for a distance of fifty feet, with sleeping bunks along the sides, and open spaces at bow and stern for managing the boat. Two masts rigged with square sails were provided.

The boat was run until after dark every night and was started before daylight in the morning. Wherever possible she was tied to a snag out in the stream for the night so as to make it impossible for the Indians to attack by surprise. When the party arrived at Fort Union they learned that the steamer had been up, but had gone back. After some deliberation it was decided to undertake the rest of the journey and trust to luck not to be caught by the ice. Everyone took a hand at the oars and rapid progress was made. Game was plentiful and the boat was full of golddust, and in spite of the fear of ice and Indians the party were in the best of spirits. They arrived at Sioux City November 22, with the river running full of ice. Two days later and they would have been frozen in. Mr. Hubbell received $175 per passenger.*

* This account is taken from the published narrative of Mr. Hubbell in the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* of December 11, 1898. Mr. Hubbell has published several most interesting and valuable

A singular incident happened in the summer of 1867, growing out of the wreck of one of the river boats. In July of that year the steamer *Trover* was wrecked at a point 240 miles below Fort Benton. The *Ida Stockdale* happened along about the time, took her freight and passengers to Benton, and on the way back took off her machinery and carried it to St. Louis. When she left the wreck there were two colored boys asleep in the hold, and the boat went off without knowing they were there. On waking up and finding themselves alone, without a thing to eat or any means of defense, and surrounded by a wilderness wholly unknown to them, they were completely paralyzed with fright; but recovering their presence of mind they saw that they must find some relief immediately or they would die of starvation. They left the wreck and started down the river. In crossing a small tributary of the Missouri one of the boys was drowned. The other kept on night and day, most of the time back from the river, to avoid the bends and the swamps and underbrush. He had nothing to eat except a little bark and some flower blossoms and did not stop a moment for sleep. His keeping back from the river caused him to miss the boats and trading posts. Finally, almost famished

accounts in the St. Paul papers of his early experiences as a Missouri River trader.

and exhausted, he beat his way through a dense willow growth to the bank of the river in the hope that some boat would come along before he should die. Shortly afterward a steamer hove in sight—the *Sunset*—on her way up the river. She was a veritable sun*rise* to the poor boy, who began waving an old white hat, almost the only article of clothing he had left. The people on the boat saw the signal and sent the yawl out and brought the boy in. His face was almost raw from mosquito bites, and he was so weak that he could scarcely stand. He was found at a point twenty-five miles below Fort Rice, or 642 miles, by river channel, below where the *Trover* was wrecked. He traveled this distance in nine days. With all the cut-offs duly allowed for, he must have averaged seventy miles a day during this time, and all the while without food. Were it not that the facts seem well established, such an example of physical endurance would be incredible.* The name of this little hero was Frederick Good and his home was in St. Louis.

* "The *Ida Stockdale* reached Fort Benton June 29, 1867. She could not have returned to Trover Point before the 1st or 2d of July. The *Sunset* picked up the boy July 11. The time that he was alleged to have been lost could therefore not have been far wrong, and the distance he traveled is known with accuracy."

CHAPTER XXIV.

LA BARGE AGAIN IN OPPOSITION.

With a view to entering, upon a large scale, into the newly developing business at the head waters of the Missouri, the firm of La Barge, Harkness & Co. was formed in St. Louis in the winter of 1861-62. The members were Joseph La Barge, Eugene Jaccard, James Harkness, John B. La Barge, and Charles E. Galpin. Each partner put in ten thousand dollars. Two steamboats were purchased—Captain La Barge's boat, the *Emilie*, and a light-draft boat, the *Shreveport*. In the division of duties and responsibilities among the partners Jaccard was to attend to the affairs of the firm in St. Louis, the La Barges were to manage the steamboat business, Galpin was to look after the trade along the river, and Harkness was to go to the mines with an outfit of merchandise, and was to remain there and develop a business with those rapidly growing communities.

When it was known that Captain La Barge was to make a spring trip to Benton, he was overwhelmed with applications, not merely from those who wanted

to go to the mines, but from business men and capitalists who wished to join the enterprise. He could easily have organized a capital of a million dollars, but he adhered to his first plan and pushed his preparations with vigor. The *Shreveport* was first gotten ready to sail and left port April 30, 1862. Captain John La Barge was master. The *Emilie* followed on the 14th of May.

As a performance in steamboating the voyage of the *Emilie* was a great success. She was loaded to the guards with some 350 tons of freight and 160 passengers. Captain La Barge himself had never been more than a hundred miles above Fort Union; yet he made the whole trip, 2300 miles, in a little less than thirty-two days, and would have finished it sooner but for the fact that he had to help the *Shreveport* the last hundred miles of the distance. The boats arrived at Fort Benton at noon June 17, and at 6 A. M., June 19, the *Emilie* started down the river, reaching St. Louis on the 3d of July. Her speed up averaged 71 miles per day; down, 152 miles.

An exciting incident of the trip was the passing of the American Fur Company's boat, the *Spread Eagle*. The new opposition of La Barge, Harkness & Co. was a formidable one, and the Company bestirred itself with unusual vigor to be first on the ground with its annual outfit. The *Spread Eagle*

left St. Louis with three days the start, but was overtaken by the *Emilie* near Fort Berthold. For the next two days the boats were near each other most of the time. The day after leaving Berthold the *Emilie* passed her rival for good. When the officers of the *Spread Eagle* saw that they were beaten they played a desperate game, which showed to what lengths the Company's servants would go when it was a matter of rivalry in trade.

At the point where the race took place there was a towhead (a newly formed island) which at the stage of the river then prevailing was covered with water. The main channel, and at ordinary stages the only channel, passed on the right-hand side going up, and this channel the *Spread Eagle* took. But the water was now high enough to give a good channel on the other side of the towhead. As the distance by this channel was somewhat shorter, and as the *Emilie* was the faster boat anyway, it was a good chance to get well ahead and out of the way. La Barge promptly seized the opportunity. The pilot of the *Spread Eagle* with quick eye realized that he had been outmaneuvered, and seeing no other way to prevent the *Emilie's* passage, determined upon wrecking her. He accordingly left the main channel and made for the chute that the *Emilie* was entering. He steamed alongside of her for a moment, but found that he was

losing ground.* The boats were scarcely fifty feet apart, when the pilot of the *Spread Eagle,* seeing that he could not make it, deliberately put his rudder to port, and plunged the bow of the boat into the *Emilie* immediately opposite her boilers. Several of the guards were broken and the danger of wreck was imminent. La Barge was in the pilot-house at the time and was not looking for such a move, for he did not believe that even the American Fur Company would play so desperate a game when human life was at stake. He instantly called out to Bailey, the pilot of the *Spread Eagle,* to stop his engines and drop his boat back or he would put a bullet through him. The passengers likewise became thoroughly aroused, and some of them got their arms and threatened to use them if the *Spread Eagle* did not withdraw. These threats were effective; the *Spread Eagle* fell to the rear and was seen no more on the voyage. She was four days behind at Benton, and a week on the whole trip. She lost four men on one of

* "The *Spread Eagle* is just along side of us and we are having a race, probably the first ever run on the upper Missouri. She passed us and then we passed her, when she ran into us, breaking our guard and doing some other damage, There was a good deal of angry talk."—*Harkness' Journal.* (This journal of the voyage of 1862 and of Harkness' trip to the mines and his return to St. Louis is published in the Proceedings of the Montana Historical Society, vol. ii.)

the rapids by the grossest carelessness. A crew had gone to the head of the rapids to plant a deadman,* and having finished this work dropped down to the boat in their yawl. Instead of passing alongside of the steamer they made directly for the bow, and on reaching the boat the swift current instantly rolled the yawl under and the crew were drowned.

When the *Spread Eagle* returned to St. Louis charges were preferred against Bailey for having attempted to wreck the *Emilie*. He was brought to trial before the steamboat inspector and his license was canceled. It was a hard blow to him, for steamboating was his trade, and he had a large family to support. About a month afterward he went to La Barge saying that he had been trying to get the inspector to reinstate him, but that he would not do it except upon La Barge's recommendation. Bailey admitted his guilt, but said that he had acted at the instigation of the Company's agents, and he begged La Barge to reinstate him for the sake of his wife and children. The Captain was never good at resisting appeals of this sort, and he accordingly went to the inspector and got Bailey reinstated.

When the *Emilie* was reported as back from her trip, the old gentleman Chouteau sent his carriage to bring La Barge to the office.

* See page 122.

"At what point did you turn back?" he asked when La Barge arrived, for the phenomenally quick trip indicated that the *Emilie* did not reach Fort Benton.

"Fort Benton, sir," replied La Barge.

"Tut, tut! I know you could not have done that. Tell me candidly where you left your trip."

"Fort Benton, sir."

"We'll see about it. I don't believe it, don't believe it."

"Sorry you doubt my word, but it is nevertheless true."

"Where did you leave the *Spread Eagle?*"

"'Way below Benton; found her cordelling."

"Well, if you got to Fort Benton you made a good trip; but I don't believe it."

As soon as Captain La Barge reached St. Louis he loaded his boat with merchandise for the new posts along the river, intending to go back until he should meet the *Shreveport,* a much lighter-draft vessel, and transfer the cargo to her for the rest of the trip. The *Shreveport* left Fort Benton July 6, and met the *Emilie* at Sioux City. The transfer of cargo and passengers was made, and the *Emilie* returned to St. Louis. The *Shreveport* went as high as the mouth of Milk River, the farthest of the new posts except that near Fort Benton. After the *Emilie's* return from

her second voyage she went to work for the government, carrying stores from St. Louis to Memphis, and remained in this service all winter.

The river portion of the season's operations of the new firm had been a complete success. Three large cargoes had been sent up the river, two to Fort Benton and one to the lower posts. Of these posts there were four—La Framboise, near old Fort Pierre; another near Fort Berthold; Fort Stuart, near the mouth of Poplar River, and Fort Galpin, near the mouth of Milk River. It remains to notice what was done at Fort Benton and in the projected expedition to the mines.

The operations at Fort Benton and beyond were placed in the hands of Mr. Harkness. The first step was to build a post at Fort Benton, where it was intended to locate the principal establishment of the firm. The site chosen was near the spot where the Grand Union Hotel later stood. The work was begun June 28, Mrs. La Barge driving the first stake. The inclosure was made three hundred feet long by two hundred feet wide, and the post was named Fort La Barge.

Before the *Shreveport* set out to return to St. Louis, a considerable party made an excursion to the Great Falls of the Missouri. Among them were Father De Smet, Eugene Jaccard, member of the firm; Giles Filley of St. Louis, and his son, Frank; Mrs. John La

Barge, Miss Harkness, W. G. Harkness, Tom La Barge, and Mrs. Culbertson, the Indian wife of the noted trader. Mrs. La Barge and Miss Harkness are supposed to be the first white women to have seen the Great Falls of the Missouri. Four days after their return the *Shreveport* left for St. Louis, taking with them all who had come up only for the trip.

The *Shreveport* having gone, and affairs at Fort La Barge being well under way, Harkness set out July 9 with an ox train laden with assorted merchandise for the mines in the Deer Lodge Valley. When the boat left St. Louis it was expected to go to the Salmon River mines, but the recent discoveries in Montana gave a better prospect nearer home. In fact the demand for goods, even at Fort Benton, was brisk, and the firm had carried on a thriving trade ever since the arrival of the boats. Harkness followed the usual trail up the Missouri River and Little Prickly Pear Creek, through the broad valley on the border of which the city of Helena now stands, and thence to the valley of the Deer Lodge. Nothing of unusual note transpired on the trip. Harkness did not like the experience, except the trout fishing. His journal is full of complaints at the hardship he was compelled to undergo, and he plaintively asks if he "will ever live to reap the benefit." He generally "nooned at 11 A. M." in order to "catch trout for dinner." He

reached the Deer Lodge Valley July 23, near the point where the town of that name now stands.* Here he found a fellow passenger on the *Emilie,* Nicholas Wall of St. Louis, who had reached the mines some days before, and who was destined to figure prominently in the future affairs of La Barge, Harkness & Co.

After remaining in this section and prospecting around for eleven days, Harkness grew disgusted at the prospect, placed such of his goods as he did not sell in the hands of Nick Wall to be sold on commission, and set out for the Missouri "glad to be on the road home." On the Sun River he met the Northern Overland Expedition from St. Paul. He visited the Great Falls on his way down, and arrived at Fort La Barge August 18. Harkness was now "tired and out of spirits," and "adjusted his expense accounts

* What is now the town of Deer Lodge, Mont., was first named La Barge City, and was so known for about two years. The name was given by two friends of Captain La Barge, John S. Pemberton of St. Louis and Leon Quesnelle, a descendant of the Quesnelle who seems to have been the first permanent settler at Bellevue, Neb. Quesnelle had been in the Deer Lodge Valley for some time, and had a ranch near where the town was afterward built. Two years later the town site was organized by James Stuart and others, surveyed and laid out by W. W. De Lacy, and rechristened Deer Lodge. The original town site plot of La Barge City is in possession of the Montana Historical Society.

and turned over everything to the store." He had evidently had enough of this kind of life, and forthwith ordered "a boat built to go down the river." The boat was launched August 26 and was christened the *Maggie*. Harkness lost no time in getting away, and left Fort La Barge at 4 A. M. on the 28th. No incidents occurred on this trip which are of much interest. The party reached Omaha September 30, where Harkness "sold the *Maggie* for five dollars," and took passage on the *Robert Campbell* to St. Joseph. From that point he went by rail and the Mississippi River to St. Louis, where he arrived October 6.

The foregoing details, taken entirely from the diary of Harkness, show in what unfit hands the important business of the company in the upper country had been intrusted. From his arrival at Fort Benton until his departure was only two months and a half, including a trip of several hundred miles to the Montana mining regions. Only eleven days did he spend in establishing his trade in that section, the most important point of all, and then practically gave his goods away to Nick Wall, for the company never received a cent for anything left with that gentleman. Yet Harkness was the partner who was to remain in the upper country two years. "He was back in St. Louis almost as soon as I was," said La Barge, with just indignation, in commenting on the affair.

Such were the first season's operations of the firm of La Barge, Harkness & Co. In most respects the firm had made a brilliant beginning. The prospects in the river portion of the business were all that could be asked. Only Harkness' weak management of his part of the enterprise can be criticised. He was not the man for the place, and lacked the courage and hardihood for that kind of work, and he threw away an opportunity from which a more enterprising man would have made a fortune.

CHAPTER XXV.

VOYAGE OF 1863—THE TOBACCO GARDEN MASSACRE.

DEFERRING for the present our narrative of the fortunes of La Barge, Harkness & Co., we shall recount one of those mournful tragedies and one of those instances of official corruption which marked the later history of the Indian tribes along the Missouri River. When Captain La Barge, in the spring of 1863, undertook to leave the government service on the Mississippi, to get ready for his trip to Fort Benton, he was told by the Quartermaster in St. Louis that he could not have the boat, for the government had further use for it. Not having time to go to Washington to see about it, he sold the boat for twenty thousand dollars to the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, and left to that company the task of securing its release. He then chartered the *Robert Campbell,* and, with the *Shreveport,* prepared for a voyage to Fort Benton. It proved to be a notable trip. The cargo and passenger lists of the *Shreveport* were made up almost exclusively for the mines and for the posts of La Barge, Harkness & Co. The *Campbell* was loaded with annuities for

LA BARGE ROCK

the Sioux, Crows, Blackfeet, and Assiniboines, together with some other freight, making a cargo of nearly five hundred tons. The *Shreveport* got away from port in the latter part of April, but the *Campbell* was subjected to annoying and even disastrous delay by the failure of the annuities to arrive on time. Captain La Barge, who had the contract to transport the annuities, had been ordered to have his boat in readiness on the 1st of April. The goods did not arrive, and he was held in St. Louis for forty-two days before he could start on the long journey. It was considered of the highest importance to start as soon as the ice disappeared in order that the trip, both coming and going, could be made during high water. As the year 1863 happened to be a low-water year, the delay which Captain La Barge suffered made it impossible to complete the voyage. Even on the 12th of May, the day of starting, only a portion of the goods had arrived, and the rest were taken on at St. Joseph, whither they were sent by rail.

The boat proceeded on her way, determined to accomplish the trip if it were possible to do so. The water was unusually low for that time of year, and it took nearly a month to get to Sioux City, which ought to have been reached easily in a third of the time. Owing to the great danger from guerrillas below Kansas City, a force of thirty soldiers accompanied

the boat as far as St. Joseph, Mo. This precaution was very timely. Every boat that was met in the lower river reported attacks with occasional loss of life. Owing to the presence of soldiers on the *Robert Campbell,* and Captain La Barge's precaution to anchor midstream at night instead of lying at the bank, he got through all right. At Miami and at Cogswell's Landing parties tried to board the boat, but without success.

Among the passengers on the *Campbell* were two Indian agents, Henry W. Reed and Samuel M. Latta, the former for the Blackfeet tribes and the latter for the Sioux, Crows, Mandans, and other tribes in that region. Henry A. Boller, whose work, "Among the Indians," achieved some notoriety in its time, was likewise on board, as were also Alexander Culbertson and his Blackfoot wife. In all there were some thirty passengers, and this number was considerably increased at the various landings as far up as Sioux City. The value of the annuity goods on board was upwards of seventy thousand dollars.

The Indians all along the Missouri above the Niobrara were at this time intensely hostile, but knowing that their annuity goods were about to arrive, they held aloof from any desperate measures until these were received. It would have been a wise thing to have sent a company of troops all the way on this im-

portant trip, but not a soldier was to be had. The boat reached Fort Pierre June 20, and here several of the Sioux bands were assembled to receive their annuities. It appears that the Two Kettles band were in a great state of exasperation over the recent killing of eight of their number by the soldiers near Fort Randall. After a considerable amount of parleying the distribution of the annuities commenced, but for some reason, which Captain La Barge never heard explained, only a portion (about two-thirds, as he estimated it) of the goods to which the Indians were entitled were put off. The Indians could not be deceived in the matter and were very angry. They went to the Captain and appealed to him to see justice done them. They had the fullest confidence in him, for they had known him for years, and he had always treated them honestly. He was now helpless, however, and could only tell them that he was under the orders of the agent and had no control whatever over the goods. They then assured him that they should follow the boat and cause it all the trouble they could, but they would not harm him if they could avoid it.

They were as good as their word. All the way from Pierre to Union, six hundred miles, these Indians followed the boat. It is a remarkable fact, when we stop to think of it—this pursuit of a steamboat on

its laborious voyage through the Western prairies, seeking at every turn to destroy it and kill its passengers and crew. There was some deep and far-reaching cause that could create and support so bitter and vindictive a spirit as this. The warning of the Indians to Captain La Barge was taken by him at its full value. The boat was thoroughly barricaded with the cargo by piling it so as to protect the vulnerable points, and all the firearms on board were made ready for use. These precautions proved to be of the highest importance. At every woodpile Indians appeared and attacked the crew. At every favorable point shots were fired into the boat. On one occasion a bullet passed through the pilot-house, barely missing the pilot, Atkins, who was at the wheel. We shall relate some incidents that occurred on the way to Union, one more comical than serious, but one tragic and deplorable as any in frontier history.

The *Shreveport* had gone up the river in advance of the *Robert Campbell,* but being unable, on account of low water, to get beyond Snake Point, or Cow Island, 130 miles below Fort Benton, had discharged her cargo on the bank and had returned down the river. She met the *Robert Campbell* at Apple Creek, thirteen miles below Bismarck, and was there stopped by Captain La Barge. A part of the cargo of the larger boat was transferred to the *Shreveport,* and the

two then proceeded up the river, the *Shreveport* being sometimes ahead and sometimes in rear. The hunter on the *Shreveport* was Louis Dauphin, already referred to as one of the bravest men and most noted characters of the upper country. He now acted as hunter for both boats. It was his custom to go along ahead of the boat, beating up the country and securing whatever game was worth stopping the boat for. Whatever he killed, as an elk or deer, he would hang on a pole or tree near the bank where it could be seen from the boat, and would then continue his hunt. One day about noon Captain La Barge's eye, which was constantly studying the river ahead, fell upon a curious object floating downstream. It looked like a hat, but, strange to say, was standing upright on the water, with no tendency to sink at all. It caused the Captain no little perplexity. In the windy country of the Missouri it was no uncommon thing for hats to be blown into the river, but he had never before seen one ride like that. He followed it with his glass until it was near the boat, when up it rose, securely perched on the head of a swimmer who proved to be no other than the hunter Dauphin. "I had to take to the water this time," he said as he climbed on board. "They were too many for me. You are going to have trouble at the Tobacco Garden. The Indians are gathered there to the number of at

least fifteen hundred and intend to capture the boat." The general amusement which Dauphin's subaqueous adventure had caused on the boat was quickly dispelled by the sad fulfillment of the predictions which he brought back.

Just above the mouth of Rising Water Creek the boats stopped to wood, and were hailed by some Grosventres (of the Missouri, Minnetarees) who offered some meat if a boat were sent out for it. These Indians, a friendly tribe, had been out hunting for two weeks and were just returning well laden with meat. The women had made some bullboats and were about to ferry it over the river. The men had meanwhile turned most of their horses out to graze, keeping only one each fastened by lariats. Some meat was exchanged for coffee and other articles and the *Robert Campbell* resumed her voyage. Just as she was starting one of the squaws uttered a piercing scream, and the people on the boat saw a Sioux Indian riding at full speed for the Grosventre herd, brandishing a red cloth, and followed by a large body of his tribe. The Grosventre squaws took to their boats and the men to the tied horses. The *Campbell* drew in to the bank and took men and horses on board and set them across the river. The poor Grosventres lost nearly their entire herd and all the fruits of their hunt.

The name "Tobacco Garden" on the Missouri

River designated the bottoms at the outlet of Tobacco Creek, on the left or north bank of the river, eighty-eight miles below the mouth of the Yellowstone. The origin of the name is uncertain, but the place has long been well known to river men. Near this point, but on the opposite shore, was a bottom, covered with large trees, but open and free of underbrush. The south bank of the river was a "caving bank," or one that was being undermined by the river. At this time there was a very narrow beach at the water's edge, above which the bank rose perpendicularly to a height of six or eight feet. The channel was close to the shore and a boat in passing had to come within thirty or forty yards of the bank. Even if anchored to the sandbar immediately opposite, it could not get more than sixty yards away. It was an ideal place to "hold up" a boat, and the Indians were shrewd enough to understand this perfectly.

It was toward noon of the 7th of July that the two boats hove in sight of the Tobacco Garden, and there, true to Dauphin's prediction, they beheld on the south shore a large body of Indians assembled with the evident purpose of stopping them. There was no use in trying to run a gantlet like that, and accordingly the boats made fast to the opposite sandbar, the *Shreveport* about one hundred yards below the *Robert Campbell*. A parley ensued with the Indians, who

were so near that it was perfectly practicable to talk back and forth. La Barge asked them what they wanted. They said they wanted the balance of their annuities; they wanted no trouble, but simply their just dues. The agent refused them the goods, but "requested the Captain to send his yawl and bring aboard some of the chiefs and head men that we could have a talk and . . . make them a present of sugar, coffee, tobacco, etc., and by this means quiet them." The Indians likewise wanted the yawl to be sent out, but wanted the agent to go with it. They would then send their principal chiefs back with him to the boat, where everything could be talked over. They were very shrewd, and the agent almost fell into the trap. The Captain told him that he could not possibly think of ordering the yawl out, considering the disposition of the Indians and their evident purpose of mischief. Latta replied: "Why, I'll go; I'm not afraid." "All right," answered the Captain, "if you can get volunteers; I will not order a crew out." They then went to the mate, Miller by name, and a crew was made up to take Latta to the shore. When the yawl was ready the Captain sent word to the agent, who had disappeared upstairs. The latter sent back a reply that he

* Letter from S. N. Latta, agent, to W. P. Dole, Commissioner Indian Affairs, dated Yankton, Dak., August 27, 1863. See report Com. Ind. Affs., 1863, p. 170.

was suddenly taken ill and could not possibly go, but to send the men and bring the chiefs on board.*

The crew of the *Robert Campbell* were not lacking in physical courage, and the necessary force to man the yawl was easily made up. It was a little after noon when the yawl left the boat. There is no truth in the statements of Boller and Larpenteur that the men were forced to go and clung to the side of the steamer until the mate threatened to cut off their fingers if they did not let go. It was easy enough for them to get out of going if they chose to. The crew of the yawl consisted of seven men. The steersman, a gallant fellow of the name of Andy Stinger, sat in the stern. Two men of the names of O'Mally and Chris Sharky sat in the bow. There were four oarsmen, one of them a young man of the name of Martin, and the other, one of the Irishmen who had been

* The two Indian agents profess in their reports not to have anticipated any trouble. Latta would hardly have ordered the yawl out if he had suspected what actually occurred. Reed, the Blackfoot agent, says that they "continued to hollow to us for some time, and showed great signs of friendship, and wanted us to come ashore." The sum of it all is that the two men who were officially in charge of the trip entirely failed to understand the gravity of the situation, which was thoroughly appreciated by those, like Culbertson and La Barge, who had had long experience with the Indians. The sending of the yawl and the consequences which followed must ever remain charged to the account of Samuel N. Latta, Indian Agent.

whipped by "Yankee Jack," as related elsewhere. The yawl put off, and as the distance was very short, it quickly reached the opposite shore. It struck the beach head on and then swung around under the force of the current, so that it lay alongside of the bank.*

A chief and three Indians were under the cut bank on the beach when the yawl arrived. One of the Indians stood exactly opposite Stinger, with a gun in his hand covered with a leather case. The other two Indians were armed with spears. The chief was a fierce-looking man, and it seemed as if his eye would pierce one through and through. Stinger motioned him to get into the yawl. The men meanwhile were sitting quietly with their oars across their laps. The chief gave some quick directions and in an instant the two Indians with spears jumped into the boat and the one with the gun stripped the leather case off. Stinger knew what this meant, and with great presence of mind instantly threw himself into the water on the river side of the boat, where it was fortunately four or five feet deep. Slipping up along the boat he seized it by the gunwale amidships and dragged it from the bank. The movement, however, quick as it

* The account of what happened from the time the yawl left the *Robert Campbell* until it returned was given to the author in an interview with Andy Stinger, the steersman and rescuer of the party.

was, was not quick enough. The two young bucks who had leaped into the boat thrust their spears into the bodies of two of the oarsmen, killing them instantly. A third was killed by the Indian with the gun, who had missed his chance at Stinger, and a fourth was severely wounded by an arrow from the bank. The two men in the bow instantly threw themselves into the bottom of the yawl.

The Indians had no time to carry the attack further. The crews of both the steamboats were watching with breathless anxiety the progress of events. When they saw Stinger jump into the water they thought him killed. Someone exclaimed, "There goes Andy," and instantly both boats responded with their entire armament. This included two howitzers on the hurricane deck of the *Robert Campbell* and one on the *Shreveport,* together with weapons of various sorts belonging to the passengers and crew. One rattle-brained Irishman was so upset that he brandished his revolver in the air, firing off into space without the slightest regard as to the whereabouts of the enemy. The fire, on the whole, was very effective. Numbers of the Indians were seen to fall, and Captain La Barge afterward learned through Pierre Garreau, the interpreter at Fort Berthold, that there were eighteen men and twenty horses killed and many wounded. The Indians soon withdrew, and in about an hour some were

seen trying to get water for their wounded near a pile of driftwood half a mile below. It was an intensely sultry day. The howitzers were turned on them and they disappeared.

Returning to the yawl, we find that Andy Stinger, protected behind the gunwale, was steadily pulling the boat into the stream and swimming toward the sand-bar as the current drifted him down. When about halfway across he called to the men to get up, while he himself climbed into the yawl, which was then rowed to the bank. The people on the two boats were so absorbed with the battle that no one thought of going to the assistance of the yawl crew. The wounded man and the two who were unharmed got out and walked up the beach. Stinger was thus left alone to drag the yawl and its mournful cargo up alongside the boat. This apparent neglect fired him to a desperate pitch, and he let go some powerful language to the mate and others of the crew. Captain La Barge presently came aft and looked into the yawl. He said not a word, but turned away shaking his head in a manner that showed plainly enough what was passing in his mind.

Such was the celebrated "affair at the Tobacco Garden." After the return to St. Louis Captain La Barge was talking to a friend about it when Andy Stinger happened to pass by. He said, loud enough

for Andy to hear: "There goes the hero of the Tobacco Garden." The brave steersman treasured up these words as his proudest title during the rest of his life. Long years passed away before Captain La Barge heard from him again. He did not even know whether his old boatman was still alive when, in the fall of 1896, thirty-three years after the massacre, he received a most cordial and affectionate letter from him,* and two years later had the pleasure of meeting him again.

* "KNOB VIEW, CRAWFORD, CO., MO.
Sept. 2, 1896.

"MY DEAR OLD CAPTAIN
"JOSEPH LA BARGE,

"*My Dear Friend:* I should like to hear from you whether you are still in the land of the living. Thank God for his mercies. Dear Captain I should be happy to be with you a few hours and have a good talk over the hardships of our past life steamboating, especially on the *Robert Campbell* in 1863 going to the mountains. It would give me great pleasure to see you and all your family once more. It is a great many years since I have heard anything from you. Please let me hear from you soon. My love and friendship to you and all your family. I remain your true friend untill death. From the Hero of the Tobacco Garden on *Bob Campbell* in 1863.

"WM. ANDY STINGER.

"P. S. Address
"Wm. A. Stinger,
"Knob View, Crawford Co. Mo.

"Farewell Dear Captain. May God bless you all with health and strength."

Commenting upon the affair at the Tobacco Garden, Captain La Barge said:

"This event was one which could not have happened under ordinary circumstances. Master of both boat and cargo, I should never have permitted the yawl to go ashore. I was under orders of the agent in everything except the mere handling of the boat, and was bound to give him such opportunities to meet the Indians as he desired. I had gone to the extreme of my freedom of action when I refused to order a crew to go ashore for him, but could not well decline to let men volunteer. It was a lamentable affair, and one of the many crimes which must ever lie at the door of the Department of Indian Affairs in Washington. Here was an agent who gave every evidence of being corrupt and in collusion with the Fur Company, for he retained about a third of the annuities due the Indians and stored them in the Company's warehouse, from which they never reached the Indians except in exchange for robes, as in the case of private merchandise. Moreover, the agent was utterly ignorant of Indian character, full of the self-assurance which goes with ignorance, and not knowing himself what to do became the passive tool of the crafty and trained agents of the company." *

* There are numerous authorities upon the affair of the Tobacco Garden. The reports of both the agents Latta and Reed

About 3 P. M. the boats resumed their voyage, as the Indians had entirely disappeared. On the following morning the burial of the victims took place at a point about forty-seven miles above the Tobacco Garden. They were buried on an eminence on the south side of the river nearly opposite the mouth of Little Muddy Creek, and a cedar cross was planted at the head of their grave. The boat then pursued her way up the river and arrived at the mouth of the Yellowstone on the 8th of July. Here the Indians were seen again, and a few shots were fired by them at the boats, but no injury was done.

describe it. Henry A. Boller, in his "Among the Indians," describes it at length, as does Larpenteur in his "Forty Years a Fur Trader." The testimony of Captain La Barge and Andy Stinger, who in each other's presence related the matter to the author, is here produced for the first time.

In his edition of "Larpenteur's Journal," referred to above, p. 352, Dr. Elliott Coues makes the following statement: "I have offered in writing to Captain Joseph La Barge to print in this connection any statement concerning the affair that he might wish to make and would be willing to sign; but up to date of going to press have not heard from him."

The inference from this is that Captain La Barge could not controvert Larpenteur's statements, or he would have done so when the opportunity was given. This offer was sent to Captain La Barge through the author of the present work. The old gentleman retained in his old age the same spirit of haughty disdain for willful attempts to injure the reputation of others that characterized his whole life, and he indignantly refused to notice the matter. "Time will set this right," he said. The truth

The herculean labors of Captain La Barge on this memorable voyage won the plaudits of all who observed them. He seemed to be everywhere present, and the only man on whom reliance could be placed. "We got to the mouth of the Yellowstone," says agent Reed, "after the most untiring efforts, especially on the part of Captain La Barge, who seemed to know the only channel to be found in the Missouri." The Captain was constantly exposed to danger, and personally conducted all soundings of the river, going far from the boat with a few men in the yawl. The responsibility resting upon him was very great. The lives of the passengers, the safety of his valuable cargo, the danger from the Indians if their expected goods should be lost, and his own large pecuniary stake in the voyage, all rested upon his own shoulders.

is that Charles Larpenteur, although very long in the Indian country, was never a man of high standing there, and proved a failure in whatever he undertook. Like all such men, he nursed the delusion that the world was in league against him, and he took advantage of the opportunity offered by the preparation of his memoirs to even matters up. Nearly everyone with whom he deals comes in for a round measure of abuse, until one is led to believe that Larpenteur was a saint, solitary and forlorn, wandering disconsolate among the children of Beelzebub. Larpenteur was probably an honest man in his business relations, but never an able man, and his attempts to account for the consequences of his own deficiencies by attributing them to the rascality of others, does not add to the value of his memoirs as historical material. Bad as the early population of that country was, it was not entirely composed of scoundrels.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BLACKFOOT ANNUITIES.

At the mouth of the Yellowstone the voyage of the *Robert Campbell* came abruptly to an end. There was only a depth of two feet over the Yellowstone bar, and it was a physical impossibility to proceed. The annuities had now been delivered to the lower tribes so far as Captain La Barge was concerned, but there still remained undelivered those going to the Crows, Assiniboines, and Blackfeet. The annuities for the first of these tribes were to be delivered wherever these Indians could be found, but those of the Blackfeet were to be delivered at Fort Benton. Fortunately, the Assiniboines came in while the boats were at the Yellowstone, and their annuities were delivered. Dr. Reed, the agent for the Blackfeet, then advised La Barge to abandon the idea of going further, and to store the goods at Fort Union until the following spring. This the Captain was very loath to do. He knew only too well the complications that might arise,

particularly as such a course compelled him to place himself in any degree within the power of the American Fur Company. It seemed, however, the only thing to do. The *Robert Campbell* simply could not get any further. The *Shreveport* had not been able to get above Snake Point, and since that time the water had fallen materially. It was now the 8th of July, and no further rise could be expected; in fact no boats reached Benton that year. The only alternative to storing the goods was to haul them by wagon to their destination, and for this purpose the transportation could not be had. The Captain very reluctantly concluded to follow the agent's advice, particularly as the bulk of annuities were for the Indians belonging to his own agency. An arrangement was made with William Hodgkiss,* agent of the American Fur Company, and five days were consumed in transferring the cargo to the warehouse. Full receipts were given by Agent Hodgkiss, and these were witnessed by Captain W. B. Greer, U. S. Army. In addition to the receipts the Captain secured from Agent Reed a written statement of the circumstances in order that his action might have the fullest explanation possible. In those days, when the government felt that it was being

* This was the same man who served as clerk to Captain Bonneville in the latter's celebrated expeditions. He died March 15, 1864.

robbed right and left by dishonest contractors, and every claim was looked upon with suspicion, the adjustment of any matter of that sort was extremely difficult, and the innocent were made to suffer with the guilty.*

As soon as the business at Fort Union was cleared up the two boats turned their prows down the river and made the best of their way toward the lower country. When they arrived at Crow Creek, eighty-two miles below Pierre, they met General Sully, who

* Following are the official reports of Agents Latta and Reed upon this event:

Report of Judge Latta, p. 164, Report Com. Ind. Aff., 1863. "The Crow goods, as I have informed you [Commissioner Dole], were stored at Fort Union by the steamer *Shreveport*. When the *Robert Campbell* reached the mouth of the Yellowstone, she could get no further, there being only two feet of water in the channel above, it requiring five trips of the steamer *Shreveport* to convey the *Campbell's* freight to Fort Union some six miles above. We found it utterly impossible to proceed any further. The *Shreveport*, though a light-draught boat, could not have passed up empty."

Report of Dr. Reed, p. 172, Report Com. Ind. Aff., 1863. "We got to the mouth of the Yellowstone River after the most untiring efforts, especially on the part of Captain La Barge, who seemed to know the only channel in the Missouri, about the 7th of July. After passing the mouth of the Yellowstone, it was found that the Missouri River was extremely low; indeed lower than ever known at this season of the year. It was found that even the *Shreveport*, a light-draught and small boat, could scarcely get up to Fort Union with any load at all, and as the

was engaged in his expedition against the hostile Sioux. The General invited La Barge to his tent and told him he should have to impress one of the boats into his service for a time. As the *Shreveport* was much the lighter boat it was considered best to take her. Captain La Barge's brother, however, absolutely refused to remain, and accordingly Captain La Barge had to. It was also necessary to use military authority to secure a crew. The *Robert Campbell*

river has been constantly falling, it was ascertained that there was no hope at all of getting to Milk River, the next fort above. Chouteau, with a light-draught boat and not a large load, had just left his goods on the bank, not being able to get up to Milk River fort. Under these circumstances, especially as there were no teams at Fort Union and the Indians (Sioux) were all through the country, so that no company could go either with a mackinaw boat or by land, with any safety, except under escort, it was thought not only advisable but the only course, to stow away the goods, and leave them until next spring at Fort Union. The man in charge of the fort said there was an abundance of room, and there would be no danger unless the Indians should attack the fort; then the goods would have to share the lot of all the other goods and the people of the fort. The goods are all safely stored and every prospect of everything being right. Of course Captain La Barge is responsible, as the Blackfeet goods are not to their destination nor the bills of lading receipted; though I must say I never saw men more anxious to get up, nor do more night and day, to get along; and could the goods have been at St. Louis by the 10th or 12th of April, they no doubt would have all been distributed by this time."

then went on her way to St. Louis, and Captain La Barge commenced hauling supplies for General Sully. He went up as far as the mouth of the Little Cheyenne, and there awaited the result of General Sully's expedition, which was a victorious battle with the Indians. He then dropped down below old Fort Pierre, when he was ordered to proceed to Fort Leavenworth and report to General Easton. By that officer he was directed to take a cargo to Sioux City. Though late in the season, the trip was successfully accomplished. Captain La Barge then returned to St. Louis, where he arrived late in November, and reported to the commanding officer at that point. He had now been continuously at work for over six months, during one of the most trying seasons ever experienced upon the river. His nightly sleep scarcely averaged five hours, and he was constantly under the weight of a terrible responsibility. Nothing but an iron constitution could have withstood the incessant strain.

As soon as Captain La Barge could straighten matters up at home he set out for Washington to see the Indian Commissioner in regard to his past season's contract. He received full payment for everything delivered, but nothing for the annuities still undelivered and nothing for his great loss caused by the delay of the Indian Department in delivering the goods to him on time. He was, however, given a new con-

tract to transport the goods to their destination the following year.

In order to pursue this particular subject to its final outcome we shall step ahead of our narrative to the year 1864. Captain La Barge went up the river that year with the steamer *Effie Deans,* leaving space on the boat for the undelivered annuities. Arrived at Fort Union he first fell in with Captain Greer, who had witnessed the receipt of Agent Hodgkiss for the goods the previous summer. Captain La Barge told him that he had come to take the annuities to their destination. "I don't believe that you will find much," said Captain Greer. "The Company has traded it nearly all for robes."

Agent Hodgkiss had died during the winter, and Captain La Barge presented the receipts to the new agent, Rolette. The latter refused to deliver the goods except upon payment of the extortionate storage charge of two thousand dollars. He expected that this charge would cause Captain La Barge to refuse to take the goods. The sum, however, was tendered, whereupon the agent refused to deliver them except upon the prior surrender of Agent Hodgkiss' receipts. Suspecting that a large part of the goods were missing, the Captain declined this condition, but offered to give a receipt for all goods he should take from the warehouse. Driven from every position, the agent openly

avowed that he could not deliver all the goods, for he did not have them all. He stated that, under instructions from Commissioner Dole, transmitted through the Company, he had delivered a large portion of the goods to the Grosventres and many packages to other Indians. The delivery of the balance could, therefore, not be made except upon surrender of the receipts of the previous year. Captain La Barge asked to see the receipts of the Indians to whom the goods had been delivered. The agent had none, although it was an invariable rule to secure such receipts for all annuities delivered. The alleged order from Commissioner Dole was then called for, but that could not be produced, the agent stating that it came by messenger, who delivered it verbally.

"You acknowledge, then, that a large portion of these goods you have not got," asked Captain La Barge.

"Yes," replied the agent; "they have been delivered during the winter and have reached their proper destination."

All these proceedings were witnessed by the officer, Captain Greer, whom Captain La Barge had taken the precaution to have present. From what Captain Greer had told him, and from the trader's inability to account satisfactorily for the disposition of the goods, Captain La Barge became thoroughly con-

vinced that they had been used in trade, and he very wisely declined to surrender his receipts. As the trader would not give up the rest of the goods except upon a surrender of the receipts for all, the Captain went on his way without them.

In the meanwhile Dr. Reed, who had been relieved as Agent of the Blackfoot tribes, went up on the American Fur Company boat *Yellowstone* to turn over his charge to the new agent, Mr. Gad E. Upson. Mr. Chouteau had received the contract for taking up the annuities for the year 1864. He took them only to Cow Island, where, for some reason, possibly low water, they were put on the shore and the boat turned back. Mr. Upson, who had gone down from Benton to Union early in the spring, went back on the *Yellowstone* with Mr. Reed. The boat, after unloading, turned back, and a day later met the *Effie Deans*. La Barge reported to Dr. Reed the facts as to the goods at Fort Union. Mr. Chouteau, who was on the *Yellowstone*, was called in and professed to disapprove of Rolette's course, but did nothing to rectify it. So far as Captain La Barge knew at the time or ever learned afterward, this large quantity of Indian goods was traded out to the Indians by the so-called American Fur Company and constituted an unqualified theft from the government. The final outcome of the affair, so far as Captain La Barge was concerned, was

a loss of nearly twenty thousand dollars.* He died a poor man, with the government in his debt by a sum that would have given ample comfort to his declining years.

* Blackfoot annuities, 142,862 lbs., freight St. Louis to Fort Benton, at 11 cents per pound, . .	$15,714.82
Crow annuities, 12,572 lbs., freight St. Louis to the mouth of Milk River, at 8 cents, ...	1,005.76
Demurrage, 33 days at $300 per day, . . .	9,900.00
	$26,620.58
Only payment ever received on this claim, . .	7,206.55
Balance unpaid, ...	$19,414.03

CHAPTER XXVII.

COLLAPSE OF THE LA BARGE-HARKNESS OPPOSITION.

THE steamboat *Shreveport,* with the annual outfit of the new firm for the year 1863, did not get above Cow Island on account of the extremely low stage of the river. No other boat went as far as that within two hundred miles. Harkness and John La Barge put the cargo out upon the bank and hastened back to the assistance of the *Robert Campbell.* This event further illustrated the incapacity of Harkness. No arrangement was made for the transportation of the goods to Benton, although he knew that a considerable portion of the freight belonged to outside parties, and that the firm had contracted to take it through to that post. This precipitate action was due in part to danger from the Indians. In the year 1863 the tribes along the river were all in a state of unrest, and some of them actually on the warpath against the whites. Fort Union was practically in a state of siege all summer, and the danger to steamboats was a very formidable one. It was held by some parties that the sudden termination of the voyage was due

to news received of the famous discovery of the Alder Gulch placers and the desire to go back and notify the firm; but of this there is not the slightest probability. Whatever the explanation, the act itself was disastrous upon the fortunes of the firm.

Among the number of outside parties who had freight on the *Shreveport* was the firm of John J. Roe and Nicholas Wall, both of St. Louis. Wall represented the firm in Montana and Roe remained in St. Louis. Some little account of Wall's career and his previous relations with Captain La Barge will be of interest, to show how far a man may forfeit the sentiment of gratitude when his business interests are in any way involved. La Barge had previously been connected with Wall in a business way. In 1861 Wall joined the Confederate sympathizers, in St. Louis, and was captured by General Lyon in the affair of Camp Jackson, St. Louis, May 10, 1861. The prisoners taken there were all paroled, but were confined to the limits of the city. At Wall's urgent appeal La Barge became bondsman for his good conduct and secured his freedom of action. He worked for La Barge during the rest of the season of 1861.

In the winter of 1862 Wall asked La Barge to assist him in getting to Montana. La Barge gave free transportation on the *Emilie* to Fort Benton for himself and his goods, and advanced him seven hun-

dred dollars to get to the mines. Wall did a successful business in the Deer Lodge Valley in 1862, and in the fall of that year returned to St. Louis, where he entered into a partnership with John J. Roe. The outfit which this firm were to send to the mines was taken up on the *Shreveport.* It was through La Barge's patronage that Nick Wall was extricated from a perilous situation and placed in a position to do a good business. His method of repaying his benefactor will presently appear.

When Wall heard that the *Shreveport* could not reach Benton and had discharged her cargo on the bank at Cow Island, he organized a wagon train and went down after his own freight and that of several others. In the spring of 1864 he returned to St. Louis, where he and Roe presented a claim to La Barge, Harkness & Co. for forty thousand dollars' damages, on goods that were not worth at the outside ten thousand dollars in St. Louis. Captain La Barge agreed to pay the full price of the goods and charge no freight, but his offer was refused. He then told Roe and Wall that they could bring suit at once. Roe replied that he was too sharp to think of bringing suit in St. Louis; he would bring it in Montana, where he knew that the chances were much more in his favor. Robert Campbell and John S. McCune, two of St. Louis' leading citizens, protested against

this proceeding, and agreed to give bonds for the full payment of all damages. Roe refused all compromise and Wall returned to Montana and brought suit.

In the meanwhile, affairs at Fort La Barge were showing the effect of absence from that post of any responsible member of the firm. Joseph Picotte, brother of Honoré Picotte, a distinguished trader of the American Fur Company, had been left in charge in 1862; but word having been received that he was not properly attending to his work, he was relieved by Robert H. Lemon, who had been highly recommended by Robert Campbell. Lemon proved to be of less account even than Picotte, and actually took the wholly unauthorized step of turning the firm's property over for safe-keeping to the American Fur Company. The receipt for this transfer, signed by Andrew Dawson, agent American Fur Company, is still among the La Barge papers. The transaction took place August 31, 1863, and included not only the storage of all the firm's property at Fort La Barge, but the payment of their employees' wages, and the removal of the *Shreveport* freight from Cow Island to Fort Benton. The sum of one thousand dollars was to be paid for storage, and the goods were to be held as security for the payment of this sum and all other liabilities of the firm on account of wages, transportation, or other cause. Thus the

entire business of the firm at Fort Benton was practically surrendered to their great rival, and the new "opposition" was crushed almost at its beginning.

As soon as Wall began legal proceedings the goods were seized and held, pending the outcome of the trial. This did not come off until 1865, when a verdict was rendered against La Barge, Harkness & Co. of twenty-four thousand dollars, which was paid in due course. All the firm's property in Montana was absolutely lost, including a large quantity of furs ruined by the long detention. The total loss amounted to fully one hundred thousand dollars.

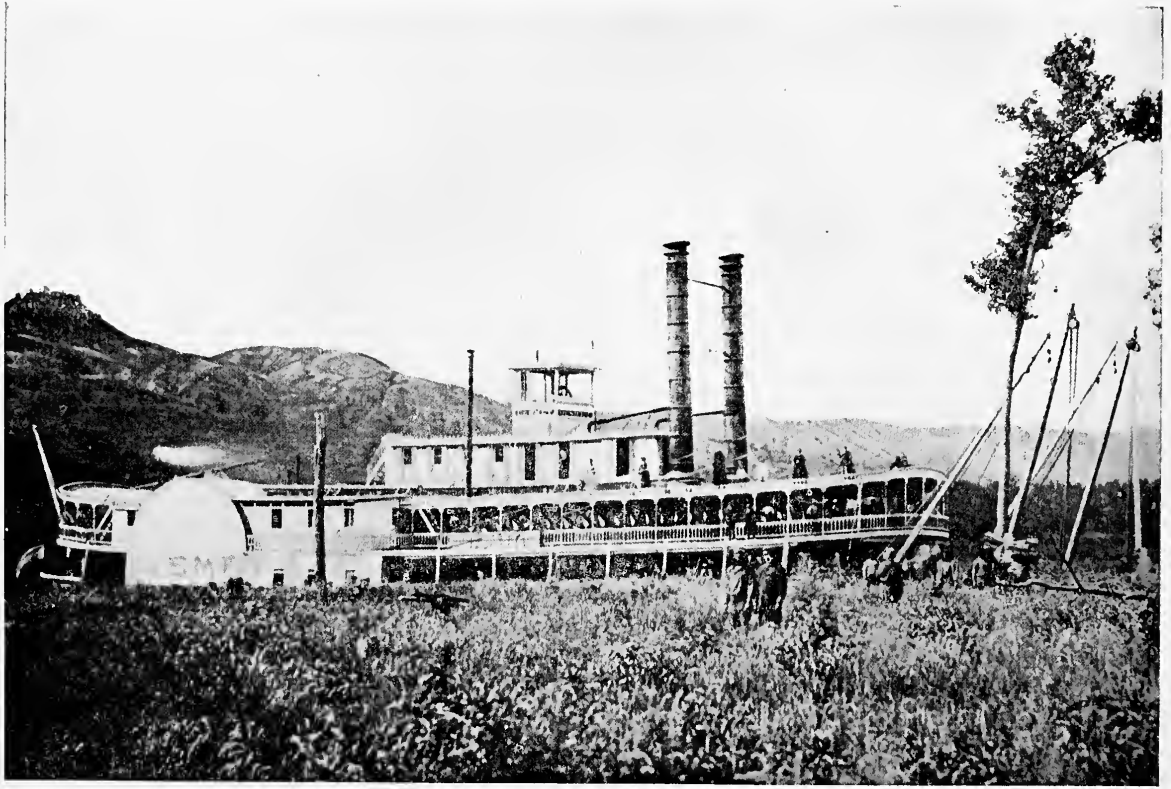
The lawsuit itself was an important one at the time. It involved the rights and obligations of carriers on the Missouri River. It was the first important legal case in the history of the Territory. It brought into distinguished notice one of the picturesque and leading characters in the pioneer history of Montana, Colonel Wilbur F. Sanders, who became one of Montana's first representatives in the Senate of the United States. On the part of the defense the case was badly managed. None of the principals was present at the trial, which was held at a point nearly three thousand miles from their home. With a skillful defense it would probably not have resulted so disastrously as it did.

The immediate result of the trial was the dissolu-

tion of the firm of La Barge, Harkness & Co. It went out of business upon an honorable footing. Every liability was paid in full, but so much of it fell upon Captain La Barge that it seriously impaired his fortune. He cherished, not without reason, a very bitter feeling toward some of the parties who were instrumental in the downfall of his business, and particularly toward the American Fur Company. There is no doubt that that concern furthered the result in every possible way. It was a principle of their business to crush all opposition, and they made no exception in this case. But it is evident that the real cause lay in the reckless management of affairs at Fort Benton and at the mines, and for this Harkness was alone responsible.

The collapse of the La Barge, Harkness & Co. business marked the inception of a system of land transportation in Montana which grew to enormous proportions. It was known as the Diamond R ◇R◇ Company. Among the ill-gotten gains of John J. Roe, in his successful effort to break up a rival company, were a large number of oxen which La Barge, Harkness & Co. had brought up the river to transport freight between Fort Benton and the mines. Roe organized a transportation company, using these oxen as a nucleus for commencing the business. By various changes of ownership it passed into the hands

of Montana men. It soon became a great company, with a complete organization of agents, issuing its bills of lading to all points, both in and out of the Territory. At one time it employed no less than twelve hundred oxen and four hundred mules, besides a large number of horses, and the sustenance of these animals was a source of no slight income to the small farmers of that section. It went out of business in 1883.



A STEAMBOAT AT THE BANK

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAPTAIN LA BARGE IN MONTANA.

CAPTAIN LA BARGE sold the *Emilie* late in the winter of 1862-63. In the following winter he made an unexpected sale of the *Shreveport*. Henry Ames & Co., pork packers, sent their clerk one day to see if the Captain would sell the boat. He replied that he did not care to, but would if the price were satisfactory. Being invited to come to the office of the firm, he was told that the boat suited them and was asked to name a price.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars," he said.

"Give the Captain a check for twenty-five thousand dollars," said Ames, turning to his clerk.

"Don't you want a bill of sale and the customary evidence that she is clear of debt?" asked the Captain, in some surprise.

"No," was the reply; "you say she is so, and I will take your word."

La Barge went down to the levee, transferred the boat, and then went to the bank and cashed the check. He recalled this last circumstance by the fact

that the teller handed him the amount in twenty-five notes, each of one thousand dollars.

This sale took place in the winter, and it behooved the Captain to cast about at once for a boat for the next annual voyage. A new boat was being built on the Ohio River by the Keokuk Packet Company, John S. McCune, President. Not proving satisfactory for their purposes, she was brought to St. Louis and offered for sale. La Barge found her well fitted for his work, and negotiated a purchase at forty thousand dollars. McCune retained a one-fourth interest. She was called the *Effie Deans.*

The boat was loaded with the usual assortment of freight, and left St. Louis March 22, 1864, with forty-nine passengers and a cargo of 160 tons. She succeeded in getting only to the Marias River, where the cargo was discharged. The boat was sent back in charge of John La Barge, and the Captain himself remained in the upper country. He hired wagons and took his property up the river, selling part of it in Benton and the rest in Virginia City. He remained in the mining regions upward of two months, although he finished his business in much less time. On account of the danger from outlaws, or road agents, it was necessary to await an exceptionally good opportunity for getting away. The Captain had decided to return *via* Salt Lake City, because to go

by way of the Missouri in an open boat would have meant little less than suicide. The feeling of the Indians was so bitter at this time that no one could pass their country in safety unless well protected.

The Captain had almost a hundred thousand dollars in golddust to take with him, and he knew that this was not a secret with himself. He caused it to be given out that he expected to depart on a certain day, but actually stole away several days before, and was safely in Salt Lake City before the announced date of his departure. The coach he was to have taken was held up by the road agents and a passenger of the name of Hughes was killed.

In Salt Lake City Captain La Barge remained for some time arranging for the rest of his journey home. He could not hire a coach from Ben Holiday, proprietor of the overland line, for less than eighteen hundred dollars. The Wells-Fargo Express Company wanted twenty-five hundred dollars to send the dust by way of San Francisco, and would assume no responsibility. These conditions were not satisfactory, and the Captain purchased a team and wagon, with which he and three or four others undertook the journey alone. Their golddust was carried in bags of thick buckskin.

While in Salt Lake City the Captain renewed his acquaintance with Brigham Young and other Mor-

mons whom he had known on the Missouri. An old friend of his of the name of Hooper, who had turned Mormon, and later became a delegate from the Territory to Congress, called as soon as he heard that La Barge was in town. He also found there another friend, Hopkins by name, whom he had known from boyhood. Hopkins tried his best to induce La Barge to join the Mormons. He assured the Captain that if he would sell out in St. Louis and come to Utah it would be his fortune. As proof of this, he referred to himself and others, who, he said, had gone into Mormonism, not for any love of the doctrine, but as a simple business proposition. Hooper and Hopkins had both been unsuccessful in St. Louis. La Barge had taken them up on his boat to Fort Kearney, about 1852, and had always esteemed them good men. He asked the wife of one of them one day why her husband had never married again, since the doctrine of the Church and the sentiment of the community sanctioned it. "He doesn't dare to; he knows *I* would leave him if he did," she replied.

The Captain called on Young several times. That dignitary received him very hospitably, took him to the Tabernacle and other places of interest, and presented him to several of his families. They went to the theater together, where they sat in a box with Young's favorite wife, the other

wives being ranged in seats below. Young never said anything intended to convert La Barge to his religion. Other members of the Church did, and particularly Orson Hyde, who was a man of education and a very persuasive talker. La Barge heard a sermon by Heber Kimball—a rough old fellow who took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and waded in. His language was coarse and vulgar, and would not bear repetition in refined ears.

The route of the Captain's party, on leaving Salt Lake City, was through Weber Cañon to Fort Bridger. They stopped there a short time with Captain Carter, who, for many years, did business at that frontier post. From there they made their way east, and left the mountain country *via* the valley of the Cache à la Poudre River. In the valley of the South Platte they met an old man of the name of Geary, who told them that a band of hostile Indians was scouring the country between them and Denver, and that they had better conceal themselves for a few days on an island in the Platte River. They acted upon this advice, and when they judged the danger to be past they resumed their journey. They had gone but a little way when they came to a spot where a party of emigrants had been massacred only a day or two before. Their timely measure of precaution was therefore well taken.

The rest of the journey was made without noteworthy incident. The party reached the Missouri at Nebraska City just in time to catch the last boat to St. Louis. They arrived home about December 1. Captain La Barge found that the *Effie Deans* had returned and had been chartered by McCune's company to go to Montgomery, Ala. She made this trip in safety, returning to St. Louis before ice closed in. Probably no other boat ever made so long a trip on inland waters in a single season, including also a sea voyage, as did the *Effie Deans* in 1864. The distance on the Missouri up and back was 4570 miles; that on the Mississippi to the Gulf and back was 2522 miles; that from Mobile to Montgomery and back was 676 miles; and that across the Gulf from the mouth of the Mississippi to Mobile and back not less than 600 miles. The whole distance traveled was about 8400 miles.

In April, 1865, Captain La Barge started up the river again on the *Effie Deans*. At Nebraska City came the news of Lee's surrender, and at Decatur that of the assassination of Lincoln. There was great commotion among the passengers at the news of this terrible deed. There were many ex-Confederates on board, some of whom expressed their satisfaction at the event, and there might very easily have been trouble between them and the Union pas-

sengers; but Captain La Barge skillfully avoided all difficulty.

The voyage, though a tedious one, was completed without serious delay or accident. Captain La Barge sent the boat back in charge of the pilot, Captain Ray, and himself started with another outfit of goods for the mines. This time he went to Helena, which had sprung into existence since his last trip to Montana. He bought a small house in which to store his goods and he and his son acted as salesmen.

In the meanwhile Captain La Barge's brother had again involved St. Louis parties in serious difficulty on account of the non-delivery of freight. John S. McCune had shipped to Fort Benton a fine cargo of goods on the *Kate Kearney*, Captain John La Barge, master. The very hostile attitude of the Indians caused the Captain to abandon the trip a little above Fort Union. When the news reached the mines suits were brought against McCune aggregating some three hundred thousand dollars. As soon as word reached St. Louis, McCune saw the gravity of the situation, and instantly dispatched a message to La Barge in Montana *via* the overland route. It fortunately reached the Captain before he had finished his business in Helena, and he set out forthwith for Fort Benton, leaving his son in charge of the store. He felt certain that Captain Ray, the pilot of the *Effie*

Deans, would not abandon the cargo, and he was not mistaken. When Ray met the *Kate Kearney*, on his return trip, he transferred the cargo to the *Effie Deans*, and brought it back to Fort Galpin, a little above the mouth of Milk River, but could get no further on account of low water. He then sent an express to Fort Benton for teams. Captain La Barge was there at the time, and at once procured thirty ox teams of five yoke each, with the necessary wagons, and started for Fort Galpin. There he took all the freight and delivered it safely at its destination. It was a prodigious task, but its timely completion saved McCune from a disastrous loss. The suits were all withdrawn, and the cost of transportation by wagon was the sum of the extra expense.

La Barge left the Territory late in the season with fifty thousand dollars in golddust. He went by way of Salt Lake City, where he and two others chartered a coach to take them through to Nebraska City. When within about fifty miles of Denver the stage driver refused to go farther on account of the Indians, and the party were compelled to hire a wagon and go the rest of the way alone. At Nebraska City they found the steamboat *Denver*, on which they went to St. Joseph, and thence by the railroad to St. Louis.

Captain La Barge had not been heard from in two months. He at once went to McCune's office to re-

lieve the fears under which that gentleman had so long been laboring. McCune came up to him, looked the travel-worn Captain in the face, and said: "I don't dare to ask you any questions. I am afraid to know the worst."

"Don't be alarmed," said La Barge; "I think I have straightened everything out all right."

"Are there no suits pending?" asked McCune.

"No; they are all settled, and here are the receipts."

"How much has the misadventure cost me?"

"Not to exceed ten thousand dollars all told."

McCune was overjoyed at the news, for he feared that he was ruined. As it was, in spite of the extra expense, he would reap a handsome profit. He threw his arms around La Barge and embraced him for joy at the unexpected deliverance, and could never thereafter do enough for him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CAPTAIN LA BARGE IN WASHINGTON.

In connection with his work for the government it became necessary for Captain La Barge to make several visits to Washington. Considering the interesting period through which the national Capital was then passing, it was to be expected that these visits should present some features of note. The Captain went to Washington in all three times, once in each of the winters of 1862-65.

On the occasion of his first visit he was a member of a party who called upon the President to present him with a fine robe of fur. Three years before this Captain La Barge had promised Lincoln to procure for him a good buffalo robe; but the rapid march of events and the great matters that weighed upon the public mind had so far kept him from fulfilling his promise. On the present occasion it was proposed to give the President an elegant robe composed of ten beaver skins, the whole richly lined and embroidered.

The members of the party were Dr. Walter A.

Burleigh of Yankton, Dak.; Captain La Barge, Charles E. Galpin,* and several others. Dr. Burleigh acted as spokesman. The delegation were shown to a room apart from the general reception room, and Lincoln, after a little while, came in, saying that he had sent them in there so that he might have some uninterrupted talk with them about the West. He remembered at once the old steamboat Captain with whom he had ridden on the Missouri, and he greeted La Barge with great cordiality. After some general conversation Dr. Burleigh arose, took the robe, asked the President to stand up, and then threw it over his shoulders. Lincoln folded it around him like a blanket and danced about for an instant in Indian fashion. He seemed greatly delighted with the gift. He then asked the party many questions about the West, for the Indian troubles were at that time causing the administration a great deal of annoyance.

* Galpin's mission to Washington was to secure reimbursement of a ransom which he had paid for the liberation of a white female prisoner, who had been captured the year before at the time of the Minnesota massacres. Galpin had been sent by La Barge from Fort La Framboise to rescue the prisoner, and had been compelled to pay fifteen hundred dollars. Captain La Barge took her down in his boat to Sioux City, whence she was sent home. He had Galpin go with him to Washington to assist in presenting the matter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The ransom money was reimbursed in full.

In the winter of 1863-64 La Barge saw the President again. The only subject of importance which was touched upon on that occasion was the Indian, in whose welfare he always displayed the deepest interest. As it was a subject which had often aroused the Captain's indignation and pity, he made the most of his opportunity to acquaint the President with the facts. He told him of the gross frauds practiced on the Indians, and how their annuities, under present conditions, had to pass through the hands of some of the worst rascals on the face of the earth, who deliberately cheated the Indians right and left. Lincoln replied that he knew it; that, under the stress of war, he was not able to send just the men he would like to into that country as Indian agents, and that too many of them were importunate place-seekers of worthless character whom members of Congress were anxious to get rid of somewhere. "But wait," said he, "until I get this Rebellion off my hands, and I will take up this question and see that justice is done the Indian."

The Captain made his third visit to Washington in the winter of 1864-65. His particular business was to secure payment on his government contracts, which had been approved by the Department of War and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but disallowed by the Treasury. He went to Secretary Chase, but was

told by that gentleman that all Missourians were *prima facie* Rebels, and that that was why his account was being held up. La Barge did not relish this very much, as he had been doing business for the government all through the war, and had even gone so far as to take the oath of allegiance. He went to Lincoln and laid the matter before him. The President smiled at Chase's remark, gave La Barge a card with his autograph on it to hand to Chase, and said he presumed that would fix matters all right. La Barge went back, and the account was paid without further delay. La Barge, with his usual distrust of the American Fur Company, suspected that some of its members had been giving him a bad character in Washington in order further to cripple his opposition.

On the occasion of his interview with the President he brought up the matter of the Blackfoot annuities, explicitly charging that these goods had been wrongfully disposed of and had not reached their proper destination. Lincoln sent for the proper officer of the Indian Department to hear La Barge's accusation. This officer stated that he had receipts signed by the Indian chiefs saying that they had received their annuities. The signatures of the Indians were witnessed by agents of the American Fur Company. La Barge declared that the receipts were false; that

he had himself carried these goods and knew that the Indians had not received them, but that they had been appropriated by the American Fur Company and sold. "Well," said the official, "there are the receipts; we cannot go back of them; they have been considered final evidence in such cases since the foundation of the government." And there the matter rested.

While in Washington on this visit La Barge was summoned before the Senate Committee on Pacific railroads and questioned by B. Gratz Brown upon his knowledge of the Western country and his opinion upon the availability of certain routes for a transcontinental line.

Before he left Washington the Captain was the central figure in an amusing little incident that occurred at Ford's Theater. *Harper's Weekly* had published a story of La Barge's steamboating experiences which ran something like this: On one of his trips up the river in the earlier part of his career there were several Englishmen aboard. They had a map and applied themselves industriously for the first day or two in trying to identify the various places upon it with those along their route. They were in the pilot-house a good deal, and one of them questioned La Barge rather officiously about the geography of the country.

"What place is this that we are approaching, Mr. Pilot?" he asked.

"St. Charles, sir," La Barge replied.

"You are mistaken, sir; according to the map it is ——"

La Barge made no reply. He stopped as usual at St. Charles and then went on his way. Presently they came to another village.

"What place, Captain?" inquired the Englishman.

"Washington, Mo., sir."

"Wrong again. The map gives this place as ——."

This experience was gone through several times, the Captain's temper becoming more ruffled with each repetition, though no one would have suspected it from his unruffled exterior. Presently a flock of wild geese passed over the river and drew the attention of the passengers and crew. The Englishmen were standing on the hurricane roof immediately in front of the pilot-house.

"What kind of birds are those, Captain?" asked one of them in eager haste.

The Captain, whose language still smacked somewhat of the French idiom, replied:

"Look at your map; he tell you."

The printed programme of the evening at the theater happened to have this story under the head-

ing of " Old Joe La Barge." The Captain and some friends occupied a box, and as there were several persons in the audience who knew him, the fact that the hero of the story was in the box soon spread itself about. At one of the pauses in the performance someone called out for La Barge to stand up, and cries of " La Barge " soon came from all parts of the house. The modest steamboat pilot was panic-stricken at the occurrence and clung desperately to his seat, whereupon the audience called for him the more; but nothing would induce him to stir.

We may here properly refer to Captain La Barge's extensive acquaintance with public men of the West. His prominence in the carrying trade of Western rivers, when travel was largely done by boat, brought him into contact with distinguished characters from all parts of the country. There were few public men in the West whom he did not know, and his personal estimate of their character as they appeared to him is not without interest and value. We have already noted his acquaintance with Audubon, General Warren, Dr. Hayden, Brigham Young, and others.

The Captain knew General Lee when the latter was stationed in St. Louis as an officer of engineers in charge of river and harbor works on the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers.

He knew both of the Johnstons,—Albert Sidney

and Joseph E.,—and at the time of the Mormon War transported much of the supplies and munitions of war used by Albert Sidney Johnston on his arduous and perilous campaign.

He saw Grant for the first time during the Mexican War, and frequently in later years when he lived near St. Louis. In Grant's visits to town La Barge became well acquainted with him. He saw him in the early part of the war, while Fremont was in command at St. Louis. He was trying to get an interview with the General, but that officer was harder to reach than a king or the Pope. He would keep people waiting for hours, and then as like as not refuse them an audience. In the winter of 1864-65 La Barge saw Grant in Washington. The head of the armies of the Union spoke to the steamboat pilot in as equal and friendly a way as when he was unloading wood in St. Louis. He asked the Captain if there was anything that he could do for him, and expressed his desire to serve him if he could.

La Barge saw a great deal at one time and another of General Fremont. He first met him when he went up the river as the assistant to the distinguished geographer and scientist, Jean I. Nicollet. Nicollet's party traveled on the boat which La Barge was piloting. At Leavenworth there was an extremely rapid current, and La Barge expressed a curiosity

to know what its velocity was. Nicollet at once sent Fremont to measure it. It was found to be eleven miles per hour in the swiftest place. La Barge's opinion of Fremont was that which seems to have universally prevailed in St. Louis—that he was a greatly overrated man, and that his success was due more to his fortunate marriage than to his own merit. We must dissent, in a measure, from this view. In his proper niche, Fremont was a great man. He found that niche in the work of exploring the unknown West. In the faculty of making the unknown known, of doing work in such a way as to make its results popular with the public, in spreading a knowledge of the Great West throughout his country and throughout the world, he stood without a peer among the explorers of that region. In the broader field of national politics or great military responsibility, he was wading beyond his depth.

Thomas H. Benton, Fremont's father-in-law, and Missouri's greatest statesman, was an intimate acquaintance of Captain La Barge, the two men having known each other from La Barge's childhood until Benton's death. Captain La Barge had a great admiration for the bluff old Senator, although he did not like the way in which he used his powerful influence in shielding the American Fur Company on so many occasions from the just consequences of

their illegal acts. Benton was a frequent passenger on the Missouri River boats, and La Barge saw a great deal of him there. He recalled particularly a trip which the Senator made as far up as Kansas City, where he went to meet Fremont, who was returning from the West. It was a very interesting voyage. The people all along the river wanted to see him, and calls for "Old Bullion" compelled him to appear at every landing place. He made numerous addresses, and the boat was frequently delayed to permit this interchange of greetings between the people and their distinguished servant. Benton was in the pilot-house a great deal,—as every traveler in those days liked to be,—and La Barge never forgot his expression of deep faith in the future of the West, so unlike that of most of his Congressional associates from east of the Mississippi. He said once to Captain La Barge: "You will live to see railroads across to the Pacific, and up the Missouri beyond the Great Falls." La Barge, a much younger man, replied that he scarcely expected to see that in his lifetime. "But I have," said the Captain, in telling of this conversation, "and I have seen far more than even Senator Benton dared to hope for." In the same line of thought the Senator once said, as he pointed to the west, which was overspread with the marvelous glow of evening: "That is the East"—

for he felt that we should yet go in that direction to reach the treasures of the Orient.

The interesting notes of Captain La Barge's observations of public men with whom he was thrown in contact would fill a volume. His acquaintance with the army was very extensive, owing to the Indian wars along the Missouri, and he personally knew nearly all the principal officers from General Sherman down. The same was true of the Indian agents, Territorial officers, and leading business men of the West. In a time when so much public travel went by steamboat he enjoyed exceptional opportunities of seeing and knowing the men who made the history of the Western country.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INDIANS OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY.

THE course of this narrative has shown that a large portion of the business of the Missouri River steamboats pertained to the Indians who dwelt on the banks of that stream. The great valley had been their home for unknown generations. The tribes were distributed along its course or those of its tributaries, from its mouth to their sources. First came the Missouris, whose name the river still bears—a tribe long since extinct as a separate organization. The Osages and the Kansas likewise bequeathed their names to the rivers in whose valleys they dwelt. The Omahas have lived, since the white man knew them, a short distance above the city which perpetuates their name, while a hundred miles to the westward in the valley of the Loup Fork of the Platte dwelt the four tribes of the Pawnees. From the point where Sioux City now stands, northward nearly to the British line, the great nation of the Sioux held a wide tract of country on both sides of the river. Within their territory dwelt the treacherous Aricaras, near the mouth of

the Grand River, and the stalwart Cheyennes at the eastern base of the Black Hills. The unhappy tribe of the Mandans lived near the river some distance north of the modern town of Bismarck, and near them were the Minnetarees, or Grosventres of the Missouri. Along the northern shore of the river from the Mandans to Milk River, and northward far into British territory, roamed the numerous bands of the Assiniboines, one of the most populous of the plains tribes. From Milk River to the sources of the Missouri was the land of the hostile Blackfeet, where dwelt the Piegan, Blood, and Blackfoot bands and the Grosventres of the Prairies. Finally, in the valley of the Yellowstone and its great tributary the Bighorn, was Absaroka, the home of the proud tribe of the Crows.

All of these tribes gravitated toward the great watercourses, as man, in every stage of his history has done. It was not in this case the use of the stream as a transportation route that made it attractive. The Missouri Valley tribes, unlike those of the Great Lakes, or the Coast, or the northern rivers, were not good navigators. The stream was a treacherous one, and its shores did not yield a timber suitable to the crude workmanship of the Indian. Skin boats were used to a limited extent, but as a rule the horse and not the boat was the means of travel and transporta-

tion. The great importance of the river arose from other considerations. In a region where streams are scarce and where most of them dry up in the summer, this river furnished a never-failing supply of as healthy a drinking water as flows on the surface of the globe. Then its valley was the only timbered region of consequence for hundreds of miles on either side. Groves of cottonwood, walnut, cedar, and willow lined its banks, and the Indian here found all the wood that his simple order of life required. The abundant groves along the bottoms gave splendid shelter from the heat of summer and the cold of winter.

The entire watershed of the river was thus originally occupied by Indians. Considering its extensive area, their numbers were very few—scarcely one to ten square miles. But as they mostly dwelt near the rivers, the country seemed to the early navigators more densely populated than it really was. Into this primeval domain there came, more than two centuries ago, strange visitors who never went away. They were welcomed at first; but every foot of ground they gained was held, farther and farther up the river to its source among the mountains, thence to the River of the West, and down its rugged valleys to the western sea. It was a sad day to the tribes of the Missouri Valley, as to every other, when the white

man came, but a far sadder day when the emigrant and settler came. Between these two epochs there was a long interval in which the paleface and his red brother lived in comparative harmony together. It was the era of the trader. Under the fur-trade régime the Indian might have continued his native mode of life indefinitely. The trader never sought to change it. He introduced but few innovations; had no desire to introduce any; and looked with as jealous an eye as the Indian himself upon the approach of civilization. This relation of the two races was ideal, and during its continuance the Indian is seen at his best.

All this was changed when the emigrant came. The traders were few in number and made no permanent settlements. The emigrants came by the thousand and spread themselves all over the country. They made roads, discovered rich mines, laid out cities, and declared their purpose to send the "fire-horse" across the plains, as they had sent the "fire canoe" up the great river. Before this ever-increasing host the game wasted away. It was estimated that in the single year 1853 four hundred thousand buffalo were slain. As the buffalo was the very life of the plains tribes, its extermination meant inevitable starvation or hopeless dependence upon the government.

All this the Indian foresaw with unerring vision,

and it affected him just as it would any other independent people. A state of unrest ensued. Depredations and outrages occurred—for the Indian understood no other way of expressing his displeasure,—and the government was forced to interfere. The era of the fur trade came to an end, and that of the treaty, the agent, and the annuity, began—an era whose history will bring the blush of shame to its readers to the latest generations. And yet it would be wholly unjust to charge the flagrant wrongs which followed to this or that particular cause. History will exonerate the government from any but the purest motives in its dealings with the Indians. It may have been unwise in some of its measures; it was certainly weak in carrying its purposes into effect; but it always sought, with the light it possessed, the highest good of the Indian. The problem, unfortunately, was beyond human wisdom to solve. The ablest minds of this country and century have grappled with it in vain. It was the problem of how to commit a great wrong without doing any wrong—how to deprive the Indian of his birthright in such a way that he should feel that no injustice had been done him. It was the decree of destiny that the European should displace the native American upon his own soil. No earthly power could prevent it. *This* was the wrong; all else was purely incidental; and whatever consideration or generosity

might attend the details of the change, nothing could alter the stern and fundamental fact.*

With this impossible problem our law-givers wrestled for a century in vain. They sought to deal with the Indian on a basis of political equality, where such equality did not and could not exist. The treaty system was the outgrowth of this attempt. Perhaps it was impossible to deal with the Indians except by treaty, but it is difficult at this day to see the wisdom of that method. It only deferred the inevitable. It made promises which, in the nature of things, could not be kept.† Made to be broken, they served no other purpose than to lull the natives into temporary

* "What consideration will induce you to give up war and remain at peace?" is the hypothetical question of a certain Indian agent to a tribe of the Sioux in 1867. And the hypothetical answer, based upon his many talks with them, was this: "Stop the white man from traveling across our lands; give us the country which is ours by right of conquest and inheritance, to live in and enjoy unmolested by his encroachments, and we will be at peace with all the world."

† Gruff old General Harney had his own views upon this treaty business. When Commissioner Cummings came down the river from the council with the Blackfeet, and, having lost his mules at Fort Pierre, besought the General to give him some others to complete his journey with, the General replied: "Yes, Colonel, I have plenty of mules, but you can't have one; and I only regret that when the Indians got your mules they didn't get your scalp also. Here all summer I and my men have suffered and boiled to chastise these wretches, while you have been patching up

quiet while the paleface was fastening his grip ever more tightly upon their country. It was throughout a policy of insincerity; the fostering of a spirit of independent sovereignty when in fact the tribes were only vassals. Like all insincerity, it bred endless wrong. The loss of his lands would not have been so bad to him if he had understood it from the start; but as it was, he had not only to bear this loss, but the ever-increasing evidence of the white man's bad faith; and he thus came to hate the whites and distrust their government.*

This, if we were to venture a criticism, has been the government's one great mistake in dealing with the Indians. A firm attitude of authority toward the tribes, with an unqualified claim to sovereignty of the soil, and an assertion of the right to reduce it and them to a condition of ultimate civilization, would have eliminated the element of bad faith which has

another of your sham treaties to be broken to-morrow and give us more work."

"It is beyond question that such a system of treaty-making is, of all others, the most unpolitic, whether negotiated with savage or civilized peoples, and . . . aside from its effect in encouraging and stimulating breaches of treaties of peace, is always attended with fraud upon the government and upon the Indian."—*General John Pope, Report of August 3, 1864.*

* "Send me one man who will tell the truth and I will talk with him," was the laconic reply of a celebrated chief who had been asked to meet a government commission in council.

always characterized the treaty system. But instead of this the government continued to foster to the last the notion of tribal sovereignty over the lands of the West. Under the farce of obtaining these lands by treaty it saved itself from the charge of wresting them by force from the Indian. It was a distinction without a difference, and in its effort to save its honor in one direction, it hopelessly sacrificed it in another.

The first general treaty with the tribes of the upper Missouri was held at Fort Laramie in September, 1851. It included nearly every tribe in the valley from the Omahas up, except the Blackfeet. The Indians came from far and near and pitched their separate camps on the council ground. Tribes that had never met before here made each other's acquaintance. Others, who had met only on the battlefield, encamped side by side in peace. The government was represented by men of experience and dignity. In particular, Superintendent D. D. Mitchell and Father P. J. De Smet were men in whom the Indians felt the most implicit trust. The council was convened for the purpose of coming to some understanding among the tribes themselves and between them and the whites as to their immediate future relations. It was hoped to put an end to inter-tribal wars and to outrages upon the emigrants, and to secure the right of way for roads and railroads across the Indian lands. The sev-

eral tribes showed the greatest interest in the work of the council. The deliberations were conducted with solemnity and evident sincerity on both sides. The presents from the government were munificent and well chosen, and were received with deep satisfaction. When the work of the council was completed, the tribes bade each other farewell, and departed for their several homes with every appearance of mutual trust and friendship. To all outward appearances the council had been a complete success. Treaties were made with all the tribes present. The gifts received were to be in full compensation for all previous losses caused by the white man, and the Indians were to receive goods annually to the aggregate amount of fifty thousand dollars. The treaties, as amended in Washington, were to remain in force for fifteen years. Four years later a similar treaty was made near Fort Benton with the several bands of the Blackfeet by a commission consisting of Governor I. I. Stevens and Alfred Cummings, Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

It was thus that the annuity system came into extensive vogue among the tribes of the upper Missouri. It probably gave rise to more abuses than any other one thing in the conduct of Indian affairs. The temptations for fraud were as great as the opportunities for its commission were numerous and excellent, and it required more than average public virtue

to resist them. The Indian could not go to the market and help select his goods; he had no hand in awarding the contracts for their transportation to his country; nor any means of seeing that he received what he was entitled to. His only function was to accept what the agent saw fit to give him. During the Civil War, when the currency depreciated to such an enormous extent, the annuities shrank in quantity as prices went up, and the Indian was a heavy loser from causes that he could not comprehend. The annuities were always sent up the river in the boats of the traders, generally in those of the American Fur Company. The agents were given no escort and no separate residence or warehouse, and were compelled to throw themselves upon the hospitality of the traders. In this way the annuity goods became mixed with those of the traders, and the Indian paid in furs for what he was entitled to as a free gift. This abuse was a grave one and very difficult to correct, for all that the Department required in evidence of the delivery was the signature of the chiefs, witnessed in the usual manner. It is easy to see how wide open the door was in this business for the commission of almost unlimited fraud.*

* "Traders in former years have run the only boats to that region, and had connected with their stores the only safe places for deposit; hence a convenient mixture of government and

It is doubtful if, during the period from 1850 to 1870, the Indian tribes along the Missouri River received more than half the bounty which was promised them by the government.

In the early days of the Republic the conduct of Indian affairs was in the hands of the military authorities, and it has always been a mooted question whether it ought not to have remained there. The verdict of history will undoubtedly be that it should. The spoils system came into absolute control of the agencies, and fitness and experience received scant

traders' goods has so amalgamated matters as to have converted government annuities into mercantile supplies. . .

"Our further progress up to the more remote tribes has disclosed to us more mortifying evidence of negligence by former agents, and most probably stupendous frauds and outrages. . . Immediate arrangements should be made to place the present agents independent of traders and also to enable them to build safe storehouses, where the goods can be properly protected and preserved. . .

"Deliveries of goods should be witnessed by some Federal officer who should certify *that he saw the delivery*."—*Report of the Northwestern Treaty Commission to the Sioux of the Upper Missouri, 1866.*

"The government appropriations are supposed to be liberal; but it so happens that by the time they reach their destination, they have, and not mysteriously either, dwindled down into a paltry present."—*Henry A. Boller, in "Among the Indians."*

"This system of issuing annuity goods is one grand humbug."—*Report of Gen. Alfred Sully, August 18, 1864.*

Evidence like the foregoing could be presented by the volume.

consideration. There was more or less friction between the agents and the military, for the latter always had to be called in when the former could no longer control their flocks. But the greatest defect of the system was the total absence of anything like a fixed and recognized procedure. The annual reports of the agents show how utterly lacking in all the elements of practical business was their haphazard management. Every new agent felt called upon, as a necessary preliminary to his own work, to criticise the conduct of his predecessor. He put forth new schemes and tried new experiments, until finally he himself made way for a successor who in turn deplored the failures of those who had gone before him.

Probably the majority of the agents were men of average integrity, but there were many who sought the business solely for "what there was in it." The whole atmosphere of the Indian trade was so against an honest conduct of the business that an agent who should undertake to enforce strict integrity in his official work was regarded as a fit subject for an asylum of the feeble-minded. At one time the experiment was tried of appointing only clergymen to the agencies. But the scheme was a visionary one. What these agents made up in honesty they lacked in experience, and were pliant tools in the hands of the shrewd trader. Their saintly character, moveover, was not

always a sure panoply against the attacks of worldly temptation. To more than one of them, in the words of Captain La Barge, "a dollar looked bigger than a cart wheel," and they, like the rest, learned how to connive at the crookedness of the traders. But whatever their virtues or intentions, they were powerless to accomplish any good work. The fault was in the system, which was inherently vicious, and mere honesty in the individual could not eliminate its defects.

The actual results of the treaty-annuity-agency system in the conduct of Indian affairs are now matters of history. No treaty that it was possible to devise could stand. The encroachment of settlement continually increased. It led to resistance on the part of the Indians, and resistance to chastisement and to new treaties, and these invariably to loss of territory and abridgment of rights. At last it led to war, and the final transition of nearly all the tribes to their present situation was accompanied by scenes of blood.

It is not possible to follow here the intricate pathway of the treaty system through the quarter century after 1850, for it is a long story. There were treaty after treaty, commission after commission, and a constant exercise of its best offices on the part of the government to reach some satisfactory result; but in vain. The life of a people, like that of an individual, cannot be extinguished without a struggle. Whether in this

case the inevitable struggle was intensified by the procrastinating policy of the government may be an open question. It probably was, for it was preceded by years of bad faith, broken pledges, and cruel wrongs, until the hearts of this unhappy people were embittered, and they drew the sword in a spirit of hatred and revenge.

Throughout the painful annals of the river tribes during the past century there was no more attractive feature of their relations with the whites than the means of transportation by which the paleface came to their country. The keelboat and the steamboat are a part of their life history. The steamboat in particular came to be what the buffalo had been—their principal resource for the necessities of life. It was a difficult rôle that it had to fill. To the Indian it was friend and foe, truth and falsehood, honor and shame, alike. It brought the early traders with their welcome merchandise, and alas! with their liquor and the smallpox. It brought the Commissioners to make treaties, and the annuities which those treaties guaranteed. It brought the Indian agent and the evils that followed in his train, and finally it brought the sword. When the Indian at last gave up the fight he and the steamboat abandoned the river together, and both are now strangers where once they made the entire valley teem with life.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ARMY ON THE MISSOURI.

THE rôle which the army was called upon to fill in the history of our Indian affairs was a most unpleasant one. It began while the proud spirit of the tribes was as yet unbroken, but had been aroused by ever-increasing aggression to the point of active resistance. It then became necessary to subdue them by force to absolute subordination to the government, and to remove them from their larger hunting grounds to small reservations. This thankless task devolved upon the army. It was not merely a thankless task, but a most arduous and formidable one. Compared with service in the Indian campaigns, that in the South during the Civil War was a holiday pastime. What tragedy in all our national wars can compare with the battle of the Little Big Horn? What record of retreat and pursuit is there like that of the Nez Percé campaign of 1877? Napoleon's retreat from Moscow had no terrors for the individual soldier like those of the winter campaign of Crook in the Powder River country in March, 1876, when

it was so cold that the men were not permitted to go to sleep at night for fear they would never wake up.

In the course of twenty years after 1855 military posts sprang up all over the West. There was scarcely an Indian trail in that entire region that did not witness the passage of government troops. From one haunt to another his relentless pursuers tracked the desperate Indian. Ambushes and massacres were met with crushing defeats in battle, but the general drift of the conflict was uniformly one way. The Indian was learning the weight of that dread power which had so far tolerated his independence, but was now to extinguish it forever. The struggle lasted in its main features about sixteen years, or from 1862 to 1877; but its extreme limits were the Grattan Massacre of August 19, 1854, and the battle of Wounded Knee, December 29, 1890.

For some years the Indians who were parties to the treaty of Laramie observed its conditions fairly well; but in 1854 an unfortunate affair occurred which temporarily interrupted the general peace. Some fifteen hundred Indians of three different Sioux bands were encamped in the Platte Valley, about six miles below Fort Laramie, in August of that year. One of the Indians drove off and killed a stray cow belonging to an emigrant train. The owner complained of the theft to the officer in command at Laramie, and Lieu-

tenant Grattan, with about twenty men, was sent to bring in the thief. He probably did not show very much tact in performing his delicate task, and made the mistake of attempting to take the culprit by force in the presence of nearly ten times his number of Indians. The result was the massacre of his entire party. The Indians then went to the American Fur Company warehouse, where their annuity goods were in waiting, broke open the building, and carried off the annuities.

Thereupon the government ordered General Harney to take the field with a military force, establish convenient bases of supplies, protect the frontier and the emigrant routes, and to deal a heavy blow upon the offending Indians. On September 3, 1855, General Harney attacked a large force of Indians who had taken part in the Grattan massacre, completely routed them, killed and captured upward of two hundred, and destroyed nearly all their property. This affair took place across the Platte River from Ash Hollow, a noted situation on the emigrant trail, from which the battle has taken its name.

General Harney next moved his force to the Missouri River, where the old trading post of Fort Pierre had been lately acquired by the government, and there held councils with various tribes, which again resulted in general pacification. In the following year the important military post of Fort Randall

was built, and Fort Pierre was abandoned because of its undesirable situation. General Harney discharged his task in a manner highly creditable to himself and satisfactory both to the Indians and the government; and seven years were to elapse before any further difficulty of a serious character should occur.

But while the severe lesson of Ash Hollow, the frank counsel of General Harney, and the presence of a military force at Fort Randall, kept the tribes in comparative peace, the wrongs from which they suffered continually increased, and their temper grew constantly worse. The discovery of gold in Montana brought a multitude of emigrants to and through this country, with the consequent destruction of game and threats of roads and railroads and loss of lands. Events were fast developing into a crisis, when the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States gave the tribes their desired opportunity. The frontier garrisons were depleted in order that the regular troops might be sent south. New levies made up of the able-bodied citizens went away to the war. The Indian was quick to see how this movement weakened the frontier settlements. He was made to believe, by gross exaggeration, that the situation of the Great Father in Washington was a desperate one, that his capital was about to be taken and his power destroyed. It has been asserted that the Confederates had emissaries

among the Indians, but there is no proof of any direct intrigue of this character. Indirectly, however, they exercised a powerful influence upon them. The people of the British possessions, like those of the mother country, sympathized ardently with the South, and this sympathy found effective expression in the intercourse of the British half-breeds north of the boundary with the Indians south. These half-breeds knew the border tribes perfectly, and had greater influence with them than the whites, who were strangers to their customs and the authors of their many wrongs. Selfish motives of trade combined with national prejudice to stir up strife against the Americans and to provide means for making that strife effective. The half-breeds circulated freely south of the border, and the tracks of their carts could be seen everywhere from the Red River of the North to the Missouri River. They brought powder and balls, guns, rum, and regular merchandise of trade, and their influence at this particular time was decisive. Their territory, moreover, offered a sure asylum from punishment for any outrages which the Indians might commit.*

* "I saw, while at Sioux City, Captain La Barge, who had just returned with his boat from the upper Missouri. Captain La Barge has been in the American Fur Company employment for twenty-five years, and says that never before this trip have the Indians been unusually hostile. He says that now the whole Sioux nation is bound for a war of extermination against the frontier,

Trouble first broke out in 1862 among the Minnesota Indians, where the evil conditions from which the tribes had been suffering had reached an acute stage. Under the leadership of a noted Sioux chief, Little Crow, the Indians in the valley of the Minnesota River above Mankato attacked the settlement of New Ulm and others in that vicinity, on the 18th of August, murdering and taking captive the inhabitants, destroying property, and spreading consternation in every direction. In the course of three days nearly a thousand persons were killed and two million dollars' worth of property destroyed.

The State and national governments sent instant relief; the outrages were checked; the Indians were driven up the Minnesota Valley and beaten in several battles; the captive whites were mostly released, and a large number of hostiles engaged in the massacre were taken prisoners. This work was done under the immediate leadership of General H. H. Sibley, first Governor of Minnesota. The captured Indians

. . . and that the British government, through the Hudson Bay Company, are in his opinion instigating all the Indians to attack the whites. He says British rum from Red River comes over to the Missouri, and British traders are among them [the Indians] continually. I have great confidence in his judgment and opinion."—*H. C. Nutt, Lieutenant Colonel Iowa State Militia, to Hon. S. J. Kirkwood, Iowa City, dated Council Bluffs, September 15, 1862.*

were tried by court martial, and a great number were condemned to death, but this penalty was commuted by President Lincoln except in the cases of thirty-eight, who were hanged at Mankato, December 26, 1862.

In the meanwhile the Indians under Little Crow, though checked and driven back, were not conquered or discouraged. Their emissaries were active among the tribes of the Missouri, who were aroused almost to the point of war. The execution of the Indians at Mankato exasperated Little Crow to a desperate pitch, and he vowed extermination of the whites. It was clear that an Indian war was at hand, and the government at once prepared for it. Its conduct was placed in the hands of General John Pope, who had been relieved from his command of the Army of the Potomac after the second Bull Run, and was now in command of the Department of the Northwest, with headquarters at Milwaukee. General Pope organized two expeditions, one under General Sibley, to move west from Mankato against the Indians and drive them toward the Missouri, and the other under General Sully, to move from Sioux City up the Missouri and cut off their retreat. The plan was well conceived, but the extreme low water in the Missouri in 1863 prevented General Sully from receiving his supplies in time to carry out his part of the programme.

Sibley's expedition left Camp Pope in the Minnesota Valley June 16, 1863, and two days later that of General Sully left Sioux City. Sibley's route lay up the Minnesota to its source, thence by way of Lake Traverse to the Cheyenne River of North Dakota, and up that stream toward Devil's Lake, where the Indians were supposed to be. Learning that they had left that region and had gone toward the Missouri, General Sibley changed his march to the southwest, and pursued the retreating enemy with great vigor. He came upon them and fought three battles within a week—Big Mound, July 24; Dead Buffalo Lake, July 26; and Stony Lake, July 28. The Indians were defeated in all three fights, and then crossed the Missouri River just below where Bismarck, N. D., now stands. General Sibley reached that stream on July 29, and here his expedition ended. Two days later his command set out on its homeward march.*

At this time General Sully was at Fort Pierre. The transportation of his supplies had delayed him, and it was not until the 14th of August that he started from that point on his march north. He went up the east bank of the Missouri, with a great deal of vexatious delay, and finally reached the scene of Sibley's third fight just a month after it had taken place. The In-

*See page 277 for an account of the massacre of a party of miners from Montana by these Indians.

dians, meanwhile, far from being conquered or dispirited, had recrossed the river and were on their way back to the grazing grounds on the Coteau of the Missouri. Some of them harassed the homeward-bound column of General Sibley. Sully pursued them to the northeast and overtook and fought them at Whitestone Hill, some thirty miles south and slightly west of Jamestown, N. D. The Indians were badly defeated, many of them were killed, and a large amount of their property was destroyed. Sully then returned to the Missouri and built a new post, Fort Sully, on the left bank of the river, opposite the head of Farm Island, midway between Fort Pierre and Fort George. With this work the campaign of 1863 came to an end.

The movements of troops in this campaign and the force of Indians engaged were the largest yet known in the history of the United States. The number of warriors was estimated at over six thousand, while the troops under Sibley and Sully numbered about four thousand. The campaign, however, was not conclusive. Although the Indians had been defeated with severe loss in every engagement, they were still unsubdued, and retained their defiant attitude during the following winter. Accordingly another campaign was planned for the summer of 1864. General Sully was placed in charge with a cavalry force of about 2500 men.

General Sully's first move was to build a post near

the mouth of the Cannon Ball River—Fort Rice, forty miles below where Bismarck now stands, and on the other side of the river. The Indians being reported as near the source of Heart River, General Sully concluded to continue his march in search of them, whether found or not, until he should reach the Yellowstone River. He took with him only the necessary rations for the march and sent his steamboats with supplies and materials for a new post around to meet him at the Brasseau Houses on the Yellowstone, fifty miles above the mouth of that stream. Accompanying Sully's march to the Yellowstone was an emigrant train of about 125 people bound for the mines of Montana.

Sully's route lay up the Cannon Ball River nearly to its source, and thence across to the head waters of Heart River. Here the General packed his train and left it with the emigrants under a strong guard, and himself and command, in light marching order, struck out for Knife River, where the Indians were reported encamped. He found them as expected. They were defiant and eager for battle, and an engagement immediately followed. The Indians were badly defeated, a large number being killed, and all of their property destroyed. This was the battle of Tahkahokuty, or Killdeer Mountain, and was fought July 28, 1864.

Sully then returned to his camp on Heart River, and, under the guidance of a single Indian, who, of all those with him, professed to know a passable route, started on the perilous undertaking of carrying a wagon train through the Bad Lands to the Yellowstone River. The route was west to the Little Missouri, where it turned sharply to the northwest and struck the Yellowstone about fifteen miles below the Brasseau Houses. This point was reached on the 12th of August, and fortunately the supply steamers were close at hand to relieve the necessities of the troops. This was the first expedition across the Bad Lands of North Dakota, and was accomplished at the cost of great labor and suffering.

The command crossed the Yellowstone and then marched to the Missouri River opposite Fort Union. This stream was forded with much peril, and the troops then returned to Fort Rice along the north shore. Garrisons were left at Forts Union and Berthold, but the contemplated post on the Yellowstone could not be built, owing to the wrecking of one of the steamers with most of the material on board.

Thus the military forces of the United States were advanced in permanent occupation to the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Only twice before had the uniform of the American soldier been so far up the Missouri—in 1805-06, when the Lewis and Clark expedi-

tion passed this point, and in 1825, when General Atkinson took his command to a point about a hundred miles farther up. Neither of these earlier visits contemplated permanent occupation.

By this time the Indians began to realize the magnitude of the power they were contending with, and to show signs of weakening. No extensive campaign was found necessary along the river for a number of years, although many of the Indians continued hostile and committed numerous depredations. The termination of the Civil War, with complete victory for the government, and the release of so many soldiers from Southern fields who could now be sent to the frontier, all tended to make the Indians proceed in their schemes of war with greater caution and hesitation. Could the evils of our Indian system have been corrected the tribes might readily have been brought to terms of "lasting peace," which was so confidently predicted at the time by Indian agents and even by some military officers.

In this matter of the military conquest of the Missouri Valley, as in that treated in the last chapter, it is not possible, with our present space, to follow in detail the course of events during the next twelve years. The army made some new advances every year, not only in the Missouri Valley, but throughout the entire West. Campaigns, battles, and some ap-

palling massacres occurred, and the soldiers became as familiar with the country and as expert in savage methods of warfare as the Indian himself. Finally, in 1875-77, came the last act in the great tragedy, by which the power of the Sioux nation was broken and their career as an independent people brought to an end.

Great efforts had been made for several years to reduce the Sioux tribes, by peaceable methods, to life on the reservations. Several government commissions were sent to them, and one in particular, of which General Sherman was a member, went into the whole matter with the greatest possible care. Most of the Sioux were finally located on the reservations and appeared to be peaceably disposed. But there were some exceptions, estimated to number not more than six or eight hundred warriors, who had persistently refused from the first to recognize in any way the treaties or other arrangements with the government. The agents had failed to get them to quiet down on the reservations, and they continued to roam over the country as of old, subsisting upon the fruits of the chase. They were uncompromisingly hostile to the whites and their Indian allies, and committed outrages without number upon both. Finally the Indian Department served notice upon them that unless they settled down on the reservations before January 31,

1876, they would be turned over to the military authorities and be dealt with by force. The Indians paid no attention to this ultimatum, and their case was accordingly placed in the hands of the army.

An effort was made to reach these Indians by a winter campaign, but after one attempt, which ended in a battle of no decisive results, the scheme was abandoned, because the excessive cold made it impossible to conduct operations in that shelterless country. General Sheridan, who was charged with the conduct of this important business, thereupon planned a campaign which was to be carried out as soon as the season would permit. He determined upon a concentric movement by which bodies of troops from widely separated localities should move upon a given section where it was believed that the hostile band would be found. General Crook was to start from Fort Fetterman, on the Platte, and move north; General Terry from Fort Abraham Lincoln, on the Missouri, and move west; and General Gibbon from Fort Ellis, in western Montana, and move east. The point of rendezvous was to be in the Yellowstone Valley near the mouth of the Powder River, or wherever in that vicinity further development might indicate. General Crook left Fort Fetterman May 29 with about 1000 men; General Terry left Fort Lincoln May 17 with about 1000 men, sending his supplies

around into the Yellowstone by steamboat. General Gibbon, with 450 men, left Fort Ellis on the 1st of April, crossed over to the Yellowstone, and marched down the left bank of that stream.

Up to this time all obtainable evidence indicated that the hostile Indians did not number more than 800 warriors. As a matter of fact, discontented Indians from nearly all the surrounding Sioux and Cheyenne agencies had for some time past been leaving the reservations and going to the hostiles, until the latter had gathered a force of not less than 2500 men. It was against this force, more than three times as large as was supposed, that the joint movement of Generals Terry, Crook, and Gibbon was directed.

General Crook was the first to encounter the Indians. He met and fought them on the head of the Rosebud River June 17, and although the Indians withdrew, the battle was indecisive, and the great number of the Indians, as disclosed by the fight, induced General Crook not to take the risk of going further. He withdrew to the valley of Goose Creek and sent for re-enforcements.

Generals Terry and Gibbon met about fifteen miles below the mouth of the Tongue River on the 9th of June, and their combined forces formed a junction at the mouth of the Rosebud on the 21st of that month. Here the plan of operations against the Indians was

agreed upon. Nothing was known of Crook's whereabouts, nor of his recent fight, but it was pretty well established, from various scouting parties, that the Indian village was in the valley of the Little Big Horn, from seventy-five to ninety miles distant. It was decided that General Custer, with the 7th Cavalry, should proceed up the Rosebud until he should strike a large Indian trail which had been discovered a few days before, and should then follow it to the Little Big Horn, feeling well to the south to prevent the escape of the Indians. General Gibbon, whose column General Terry accompanied, was to ascend the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Big Horn, and that stream to the mouth of the Little Big Horn, where it was expected to arrive not later than the 26th, and where it should come into touch with Custer.

In carrying out his part of the programme, General Custer moved more rapidly than his instructions contemplated, so rapidly, in fact, that he would have arrived at the appointed rendezvous, had his march not been interrupted, an entire day in advance of that fixed for the arrival of General Gibbon. The result was that his command came upon the Indian village on the morning of the 25th while advancing in three separate columns not within supporting distance of each other. Custer's column was surrounded and annihilated to a man. The other two detachments, under Major Reno

and Captain Benteen, effected a junction and intrenched themselves on the river bluff of the Little Big Horn, where they withstood for nearly thirty hours the terrific siege by the Indians, who were confident and exultant from their late victory over Custer. The total loss to Custer's command was about 270 men. General Gibbon's column reached the scene of the battle on the 27th, the Indians withdrawing upon their approach.

This was the crowning tragedy of the long Sioux wars, which had been waged at intervals for upward of twenty years. Although a great disaster to the whites, it marked the downfall of the Indian power. The various bands into which the hostile force scattered after the Custer massacre were relentlessly pursued until all were driven into the reservations or beyond the British line. Once on the reservations they were disarmed and dismounted, so as to cripple them from further resistance. Another year was consumed in this work, and the military posts were further extended into the Indian country; but by the end of 1877 the military problem in our Indian affairs was practically solved.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE STEAMBOAT IN THE INDIAN WARS.

THROUGHOUT the Indian wars of the Missouri Valley the steamboat played a part of the very highest importance. It was almost the exclusive means of transporting men and supplies along the river, except when in active campaign work in the interior. Its use in the military service dates from the very beginning of steamboat navigation on the river, as well as from the first important step toward the military occupation of the valley. When the first steamboat entered the Missouri, in 1819, arrangements were being perfected to transport by steam to the mouth of the Yellowstone a large body of troops designed to establish a post there. Five boats were brought into requisition for this purpose, and a sixth, the *Western Engineer,* was built by the government to transport a party of scientists who were to accompany the expedition. Owing to the entire absence of experience in navigating the Missouri with steamboats, this attempt proved a failure. None of the boats except the *Western Engineer* got as far as to the old Council

Bluffs, and the troops, after marching a part of the distance, went into winter quarters at that point.

Four years later the first Indian campaign west of the Mississippi River took place, when Colonel Leavenworth, with a considerable body of troops, went up the river from Fort Atkinson (old Council Bluffs) to chastise the Aricaras, who had attacked a fur-trading party under General Ashley and killed a number of men. Keelboats were used on this expedition.

Two years later, 1825, General Atkinson took a large body of troops from Fort Atkinson to a point about one hundred miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone and return. His purpose was to make treaties with the Indian tribes along the valley and acquaint them with the power of the United States. Keelboats were used, and a novel feature was introduced in propelling them—a wheel, or wheels, which were operated by hand power, the soldiers being used for this purpose.

No further use of steamboats in the military service except at Forts Leavenworth, Kearney, and Croghan, and in connection with the Mexican War, occurred until Harney's campaign of 1855. All the troops that went up the river at that time were transported in steamboats. The transfer of ownership of Fort Pierre from the American Fur Company to the army, and the movement of material connected therewith,

were also done by steam. The establishment of Fort Randall and the subsequent maintenance of that post were mainly accomplished by the aid of the steamboat.

The outbreak of the Sioux War in 1863 and the campaigns of 1863-64 called the steamboat again into extensive use. A remarkable instance of this use was the transportation of the Winnebago Indians from their home near Mankato, Minn., to their new home on the Missouri River. The feeling against the Indians after the Minnesota massacre was so bitter that it was taken advantage of to move them all from the State. It does not appear that the Winnebagos were active participants in the outbreak, but the hand of vengeance fell upon them as upon the others. They were moved westward several hundred miles, and in exchange for the fertile lands of the Minnesota Valley were given a home on the sterile wastes of the Missouri. In making this transfer the Indians were not taken directly across the country, which was perfectly practicable for wagons all the way, but were transported by *steamboat*. They were put on board the *Favorite* and other boats at Mankato on the Minnesota River, taken down that stream to the Mississippi at Fort Snelling, down the Mississippi to the Missouri, and up the Missouri to the mouth of Crow Creek, twenty miles above the present site of Chamberlain, S. D. The distance around was 1900 miles, against about

300 miles across. The Indians arrived at Crow Creek on May 30, 1863. A reservation was laid off, the necessary agency buildings were erected in a stockaded inclosure, and the place was named Fort Thompson, in honor of Clark W. Thompson, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Superintendency. Mr. Thompson personally supervised the work of locating the Indians on this new reservation.

In the campaign of General Sully in 1863 he relied entirely upon steamboats for transporting his supplies from Sioux City to the field of operations, and one boat accompanied him from Fort Pierre well on his way to the scene of actual hostilities. It was on this campaign that General Sully impressed Captain La Barge's boat, the *Shreveport*, into his service for a time.

The campaign of 1864 from Fort Rice to the Yellowstone River was conducted in connection with steamboats. Three boats were sent around into the Yellowstone to meet the troops at the Brasseau Houses. They were loaded with rations, forage, and material for a new post which it was proposed to build on the Yellowstone River near the mouth of Powder River. These boats were the *Chippewa Falls,* the *Alone,* and the *Island City*. The last-mentioned boat had all the forage for the animals on board and was unfortunately wrecked just below the mouth of the

Yellowstone River. This occurrence caused General Sully to abandon for the time his contemplated establishment on the Yellowstone.

During the next twelve years steamboats were constantly in the service of the government in transporting troops and supplies along the river. It is impossible to estimate the great value in the military operations of the valley of this important line of communication. Forts and cantonments were strung all along the river from Fort Randall to Fort Benton, and all of them, as well as the troops in the field, depended for their support upon the river boats. The conquest of the Missouri Valley would have been a very different matter had the government been deprived of this important aid in its operations.

In the Sioux campaign of 1876 steamboats bore a prominent part, one of the very highest importance, and one which had its full share of the thrilling incidents of that tragic conflict. A considerable fleet of boats was sent up the river from Fort Abraham Lincoln to co-operate with the troops under Terry, who marched across the country to the Yellowstone. They not only carried supplies, but assisted in patrolling the river to prevent the Indians from crossing, and moved the troops from point to point as their services were needed. One boat in particular, the *Far West,* Captain Grant Marsh, master, performed a service which

will go down in the history of the campaign as one of its most thrilling episodes.

The *Far West* was for a few days used by General Terry as his headquarters boat while his command was moving up the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Big Horn. The boat, after ferrying General Gibbon's command to the north bank of the Yellowstone, was directed to proceed up the Big Horn, and, if possible, to reach the mouth of the Little Big Horn. General Gibbon, being ill at the time, remained on the boat with a company of infantry a part of the way, when he joined Terry's column and resumed command of his own troops. The *Far West* ascended the Big Horn fifteen miles above the mouth of the Little Big Horn and then dropped down to that tributary. It remained there until the 30th, by which time all the wounded from Rèno's fight had been placed on board, and it then moved down to the Yellowstone, where it arrived on the same day. Three days later it started down the river for Fort Abraham Lincoln with all the wounded, and a volume of dispatches, official and private, relating to the terrible tragedy of which the world had but just been informed. The very nature of its mission made the voyage of the *Far West* one of romantic interest. Its cargo of wounded men, its greater burden of news to anxious friends and an impatient public, all mark it as one of the historic

incidents of our Indian wars. The *Far West* arrived at Fort Lincoln July 5, about midnight.*

The *Far West* returned from Fort Abraham Lincoln immediately after she had discharged her cargo, and remained with other boats on the Yellowstone until the subsiding waters made it impossible to navigate that stream. Among these boats was another, well known to the army for many years, and the only

* It has been asserted that the *Far West* bore the first news of the Custer massacre to the world; but this is not so. General Terry's dispatch to General Sheridan, written in camp on the Little Big Horn June 27, was sent by courier to Fort Ellis, 240 miles distant, and there put on the wire.

The following graphic account of the voyage of the *Far West* is well worth preserving in spite of its many errors of fact. As a word picture of what was really a notable performance, it is a fine example of journalistic writing. It is from the pen of M. E. Terry, and was published in the *Pioneer Press* of St. Paul in May, 1878:

"The steamer *Far West* was moored at the mouth of the Little Big Horn. The wounded were carried on board the steamer and Dr. Porter was detailed to go down with them. Terry's adjutant general, Colonel Ed Smith, was sent along with the official dispatches and a hundred other messages. He had a traveling-bag full of telegrams for the Bismarck office. Captain Grant Marsh, of Yankton, was in command of the *Far West*. He put everything in the completest order and took on a large amount of fuel. He received orders to reach Bismarck as soon as possible. He understood his instructions literally, and never did a river man obey them more conscientiously. On the evening of the 3d of July the steamer weighed anchor. In a few minutes the *Far West*, so fittingly named, was under full

one of the old fleet that still survives. This was the *Josephine,* which is now in the service of the government as a snagboat in the work of keeping the upper river free from obstructions.

Captain La Barge also saw service in the Custer campaign. The need of a light-draft boat for use in the latter part of the season led the authorities to en-

head of steam. It was a strange land and an unknown river. What a cargo on that steamer! What a story to carry to the government, to Fort Lincoln, to the widows!

"It was running from a field of havoc to a station of mourners. The steamer *Far West* never received the credit due her. Neither has the gallant Marsh; nor the pilots, David Campbell and John Johnson. Marsh, too, acted as pilot. It required all their endurance and skill. They proved the men for the emergency. The engineer, whose name is not known to me, did his duty. Every one of the crew is entitled to the same acknowledgment. They felt no sacrifice was too great upon that journey, and in behalf of the wounded heroes. The Big Horn is full of islands, and a successful passage, even on the bosom of a 'June rise,' is not an easy feat. The *Far West* would take a shoot on this or that side of an island, as the quick judgment of the pilot would dictate. It is no river, in the Eastern sense of that word. It is only a creek. A steamboat moving as fast as a railway train in a narrow, winding stream is not a pleasure. It was no pleasant sensation to be dashing straight at a headland, and the pilot the only power to save. Occasionally the bank would be touched and the men would topple over like ten-pins. It was a reminder of what the result would be if a snag was struck. Down the Big Horn the heroine went, missing islands, snags, and shore. It was a thrilling voyage. The rate of speed was unrivaled in the annals of

gage his boat, the *John M. Chambers,* to carry supplies to Fort Buford. The boat left St. Louis August 5 and reached Buford September 11. The commissary stores were at once unloaded, with the assistance of soldiers detailed for the purpose. General Terry and staff, with a company of troops and a piece of artillery, were then taken on board, and the boat

boating. Into the Yellowstone the stanch craft shot, and down that sealed river to pilots she made over twenty miles an hour. The bold Captain was taking chances, but he scarcely thought of them. He was under flying orders. Lives were at stake. His engineer was instructed to keep up steam at the highest pitch. Once the gauge marked a pressure that turned his cool head and made every nerve in his powerful frame quiver. The crisis passed and the *Far West* escaped a fate more terrible than Custer's. Once a stop was made, and a shallow grave explained the reason. He still rests in that lone spot. Down the swift Yellowstone, like shooting the Lachine Rapids, every mile a repetition of the former. From the Yellowstone she sped into the broad Missouri, and then there was clear sailing. There was a deeper channel and more confidence. A few minutes were lost at Buford. Everybody at the fort was beside himself. The boat was crowded with inquirers, and their inquiries were not half answered when the steamer was away. At Berthold a wounded scout was put off, and at Fort Stevenson a brief stop to tell in a word what had happened. There was no difference in the speed from Stevenson to Bismarck. The same desperate rate was kept up to the end. They were approaching home with something of that feeling which always moves the human heart. At eleven o'clock on the night of the 5th of July they reached Bismarck and Fort A. Lincoln. One thousand miles in fifty-four hours was the proud record."

started for Wolf Point in the hope of heading off the Indians, who were reported to be in that vicinity. The boat started early on the morning of the 12th. She proceeded about thirty miles that day, having made a stop at Fort Union to put off General Hazen and take on a supply of meat for the troops. Owing to the low water she made only about twenty miles on the 13th. On the 14th the party stopped to examine a broken-down ambulance on the shore. It was found to have belonged to Reno's troops, who were in pursuit of the Indians. A little farther they came upon a party of seven men on their way down the river from Montana, and through them news of Reno and the Indians was received. These men had been terribly frightened the night before. The boat had laid up near their camp and had thrown a shell into a grove of cottonwoods to search for Indians. It struck near their bivouac and almost paralyzed them with fright. They came on board next day and went down by the boat on its return home.

On the 15th the boat reached Reno's camp. The Indians had already crossed, and Captain La Barge immediately commenced ferrying Reno's command over. This work was accomplished before night, and the boat left for Buford the following morning, with General Terry and staff and 270 men. Buford was reached on the 17th, and the boat was discharged.

She at once started on her return to St. Louis, where she arrived October 8.

Strange as it may seem, considering the nature of a campaign like that of 1877 against the Nez Percé Indians, the Missouri River steamboat played an important, and perhaps a decisive, part in its operations. Chief Joseph, in his long march from Idaho, had crossed the Yellowstone National Park, and finding himself pursued and harried in every direction, struck north for the British line. The pursuing troops, whom he had so far eluded, he felt confident would not overtake him; but he did not count on a danger which arose in a quite unexpected quarter. General Miles, with about 350 men, was encamped on the Yellowstone at the mouth of the Tongue River, where the news reached him that Indians had crossed the Yellowstone farther up and were making for the British line. He at once put his command in motion to intercept them. His first objective was the Missouri River at the mouth of the Musselshell. As soon as he came in sight of the river, scouts were sent on ahead to stop any steamer that might happen along. By the greatest good fortune the scouts reached the bank just as the last boat of the season was passing down. Fifteen minutes later and she would have been gone.

The troops were brought down to the river and ten days' rations were put on the boat and taken to the

mouth of the Musselshell. The officers of the boat stated that the Indians had not yet crossed the Missouri, and General Miles accordingly decided to march up the valley of the Musselshell to intercept them. The boat was discharged and dropped downstream, stopping about a mile below to take on some wood. While there, two men came down the river in a mackinaw and reported that the Indians *had* crossed the river, some eighty miles above, and were making for the British line. General Miles instantly ordered some cannon shots fired in the direction of the steamboat. A Captain Baldwin, who had been sent down on account of sickness, was on board. He at once understood that the boat was wanted, and caused her to be brought back. The command was ferried over, and on the following morning, September 27, set out to the northwest after the Indians. They were overtaken on Snake Creek, where Chief Joseph was defeated in battle, and the greater part of his people captured. This point was within fifty miles of the boundary, and about one hundred of the Indians actually got across the line. But for the timely aid of the steamboat it is probable that the whole band would have escaped.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PEACE COMMISSION OF 1866.

We left Captain La Barge in 1865 just as he had returned from Montana on his second journey by way of Great Salt Lake. His boat, the *Effie Deans*, had reached St. Louis some time before he did. The boat was still owned in partnership with John S. McCune and Eugene Jaccard. La Barge tried to get full possession of her, offering, however, either to buy or sell. Not being able to negotiate a purchase, he demanded a dissolution of the partnership, and bought the boat in. He then put six thousand dollars' worth of repairs on her, and in the spring advertised for a trip to Benton. He secured a full cargo, and had every prospect of a profitable trip, when one of those sudden accidents overtook him which were so common in the hazardous business he was carrying on. He had hesitated a good deal about insuring the boat, and finally, upon McCune's advice, concluded not to do so. He felt safe if he could get out of port, the greatest danger being from fire there. The insurance rates were so high that it was a great

object to avoid them, if possible. It was on Friday that he had his talk with McCune and decided not to insure. He was to start next morning. He mentioned to his wife what he had done, and she, with a woman's intuition, remonstrated strongly, saying she knew he would repent it. About one o'clock next morning the doorbell rang. La Barge raised the window and asked who it was. "Watchman of the *Effie Deans*," was the reply. "What is the matter?" asked the Captain. "The *Effie Deans* is burned up."

"The loss to me," said Captain La Barge, "was difficult to reconcile, from the fact of my having rejected insurance the day before, as well as an offer of forty thousand dollars for the boat the same day. The fire had been communicated to the boat from one of the neighboring vessels, the *Nevada*, and was in no sense the fault of my crew. Next morning Robert Campbell came down to the levee and said he understood I had no insurance on the boat. I replied that such was the case. He said that he had always put me down as a prudent man, but that such a course showed great recklessness. I replied that I thought not; that the loss was the fault of my neighbors, and not my own. 'Well, if that is any consolation, I have nothing more to say,' he replied, and walked away. His apparent indifference surprised me. I

had done business with him for many years, and had paid him as high as sixty thousand dollars commissions. Now, in my misfortune, he did not as much as offer the least assistance.

"Very different was the conduct of John S. McCune. He also came down soon after Campbell left. He looked at the wreck, said it was most unfortunate, talked very little, but told me to be early at his office Monday morning. I called according to appointment. McCune said, 'You have got to have a new boat. Let us go down to the Marine Railway Ways in Carondelet and see what we can do.' We went down, saw the superintendent, told him what we wanted, and asked him if he could undertake the construction of a boat. He replied that he could, and McCune told him to go ahead on my plans, and he would back me with his credit. I drew the entire plans and specifications for the boat, machinery and all, and she was built that summer accordingly. Before I got back in the fall McCune had named her for me, but I renamed her *Octavia*, for my second daughter. She cost fifty-seven thousand dollars, and was a splendid boat. I paid for her partly in cash and gave my notes for the balance."

In the meantime a commission had been appointed to go up the river and make treaties with certain tribes of Indians in regard to the right of way for

railroads across their lands. It was officially known as the Northwestern Treaty Commission, but was popularly referred to as the Peace Commission of 1866. It was composed of Newton Edmunds, Governor of Dakota Territory; General S. R. Curtis, a well-known officer of the Iowa Volunteers; Orrin Guernsey, and the Rev. Henry W. Reed, who so long figured as an Indian agent on the upper river. The Commission were well provided with presents and proposed to travel in becoming state. Captain La Barge had secured for the summer, while the *Octavia* was building, another boat, a fine new one, the *Ben Johnson*. The Commission contracted with the Captain to carry them up the river and back at three hundred dollars per day. One of the Commissioners wanted the Captain to hire his son as clerk, or in some other capacity, at five dollars per day. The Captain had made up his crew and did not care to go to this extra and unnecessary expense. But as the Commissioner rather insisted, the charter price was raised to $305 per day, and the young man enjoyed a fat sinecure during the trip—an instance of the kind of corruption which was almost universal in the period following the war.

To Captain La Barge the voyage seemed more like a pleasure excursion than a business enterprise. The boat moved by very leisurely stages,

always tying up early in the evening and starting late in the morning. Whist and other games were the order of the day. Long stops were made at all interesting points, and the party enjoyed exceptional opportunities of seeing Indian life in all its wildness. As a means of accomplishing any good, the Commission was looked upon from the first by the people of the Missouri Valley as little more than a farce. No end of ridicule was poured upon it, and it was held up to the general contempt by those who had any definite acquaintance with the situation. The Indians were generally loath to negotiate, fearing that the Commission "would want them to sign some paper that would take from them their lands and houses and oblige them to seek new ones farther west." It cannot be said that any good came from this Commission—certainly nothing to justify its great expense. It did without doubt create new complications, lead to increased dissatisfaction on the part of the Indians, and, on the whole, aggravate an already serious situation.*

Some of the incidents on this trip had a flavor of danger about them, and we shall narrate one as given

* Charles Larpenteur, who was interpreter for the Commission in their negotiations with the Assiniboines at Fort Union, says in his journal, "The great Peace Commission was a complete failure." Such was the general sentiment along the valley.

us by Captain La Barge. It related to an interview of the Commissioners with the Yanktonais, who were well known as the most relentlessly hostile of any of the Sioux tribes.

"Some twenty miles below the mouth of White Earth River," said Captain La Barge, "I saw two Indian hunters on the hills. I hailed them, landed the steamer, asked them on board, and after feasting them (an indispensable preliminary to the transaction of any business), inquired if they were Yanktonais, and if so where were the rest of the tribe. They replied in the affirmative, and said that their camp was about ten miles off, on the White Earth River. The Chairman of the Commission asked them to go to camp and tell the chiefs to move their whole village down to the mouth of the White Earth and there await the arrival of the boat for the purpose of holding a council. He inquired the size of the village, and found it to be six hundred tepees, which meant about three thousand Indians.

"I remonstrated at this proposition, strongly urging that only the chiefs be invited. Should so powerful a band of these hostile Indians get any advantage of us they would certainly use it. We had no power of resisting them, having only thirty people in all, and they were poorly armed. The Indians would, I feared, make a rush and attempt to capture

the steamer as soon as we landed. Our interpreter, Zephyr Rencontre, seconded me in this opinion. I had been in the power of these Indians once before, and, thanks to Rencontre, I was wearing my hair on this occasion.

"The Chairman of the Commission said he perceived that I was afraid of the Indians, but not to be alarmed; he would answer for all harm. The Indians would never dare molest a government officer. To me, who had spent all my life among the Indians, this gratuitous insinuation from a mere novice in Indian experience cut me to the quick, and I replied: 'Very well, I will land as you say, but before we get through we shall see who is afraid of Indians.'

"This was another instance of the mistakes made by our government in the selection, to treat with the Indians, of men without knowledge of the native character. It was a universal rule that such men would treat with contempt the cautious bearing of those who knew the Indians; and this ignorant bravado has many times led to disastrous consequences. It is very unpleasant to act with such men, who ridicule one's honest knowledge of peril, and are powerless to help when they get you into danger. It was also a common observation with me that the volunteer officers of the war were always more haughty and overbearing than those bred to the pro-

fession. They loved to assume, assert, and display authority, where the trained soldier would see no occasion to do so.

"I said to Curtis on this occasion, 'This course is contrary to my judgment, General; and in order not to be responsible for the consequences I desire a positive order from you before I adopt it.' He gave me the order. The Indians arrived just as we were tying up the boat. The women immediately commenced setting up the lodges and the men began to rush on board. They were all armed. Curtis had said, when I foretold this: 'We will keep them off, only letting on those we want.' I replied, 'You will see, General. It will be impossible to keep them off.'

"As already stated, the Indians at once rushed on board, and unfortunately did not congregate in one place, but scattered themselves in every direction. Matters at once became serious. I was thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the boat and her passengers, but remained perfectly cool and indifferent in outward appearance, and did not permit myself to resent the actions of the Indians. An act of that sort might have precipitated difficulty. We were over a powder mine, and a spark was liable to fall at any moment. The Indians became insolent, would elbow us around, sneer at us, display their muscular arms, and try in every way to provoke us to action. One

Indian, an ugly fellow and noted villain, Crazy Wolf, followed me everywhere I went, armed with gun, pistol, and bow and arrows. He tried in every way to get me to notice him. At this time I consulted with Zephyr on the situation, saying that I feared trouble was brewing. He replied that he thought so too, and that I had better prepare for prompt measures. I had steam kept up. Pilot and engineer remained at their posts, and the mate was kept forward. He had been instructed to cut the line whenever he should hear a single tap of the bell.

" Meanwhile the Commissioners had been attempting negotiations, but to little purpose. In front, on the boiler deck, there were a table and seats for the principal Indians. Curtis tried to call them to order, but without success. He then summoned Rencontre and tried to talk to them. He told them he was about to roll some bales of goods on shore and requested that they would withdraw and distribute them. They answered to roll them on shore; the women would take care of them; for their part they would remain on the boat.

" Nothing whatever could be done. Matters became dubious. One by one the Commissioners slipped away and locked themselves in their staterooms. General Curtis was finally left alone, and after a while he also withdrew, and told me to get out

of the scrape as best I could. He fully realized the gravity of the blunder he had made, and his own inability to cope with the situation.

"The Indians as yet had made no attempt on the staterooms, but they were incensed at the withdrawal of the Commissioners and might do so at any moment. Rencontre said to me, 'The Indians don't like this, and will give us trouble. We had better do something right away.' 'Is it time to cut loose?' I asked. 'I think so,' he replied. I gave the signal, the line was cut, the wheels began to turn backward and the boat slid quickly from the bank. The sudden move astounded the Indians. Those on shore seized the line and began pulling before they discovered that it was cut. I knew they would not dare to fire, for fear of shooting their own people. Those on the boat were panic-stricken and began to leap overboard. I caused the nose of the boat to be held close to shore so that they could get to land without drowning, and in a few minutes the boat was clear of them. Then, reversing the engines, we steered for the opposite shore and made the boat fast. The danger being over, I went to Curtis' room and told him it was safe for him to come out. When he appeared I said: 'Who is afraid of Indians now, General Curtis?' His only reply was: 'Who would have thought that the rascals

would dare molest a government officer?' They cared a good deal about a government officer, indeed, and the remark showed how little he knew of the Indian character. I asked the General if he wanted to make another trial, but he replied that he had had enough.

"No further attempt was made to treat with these Indians, and we went on up the river. As on a previous occasion, the Indians followed us. Durfee & Peck at this time had a post on the site where Fort Buford later stood. The Indians made a signal from the opposite side of the river that they had robes to sell, and the agent at the post wanted to borrow our yawl to go across and get them. I consented, but advised against it. They crossed and actually bought several hundred robes, but just as the boat was about to put back, the Indians jumped upon the crew, killed one, severely wounded another, and would have killed all, had I not promptly crossed over with the steamboat to their assistance. Mr. Durfee afterward thanked me very heartily for this action."

The Commissioners then went on to old Fort Union, where they remained for a time treating with the Assiniboines, Crows, and Grosventres. The Crows and the Grosventres came down by the steamboat *Miner*, under promise that they should be taken

back to their camp on the Musselshell by boat. The river being too low to take so large a boat as the *Ben Johnson* farther up in safety, the Commission impressed into their service, for the purpose of taking these Indians back, a small boat, the *Amanda,* which was in the employ of the War Department. She was then on her way up the river to meet Colonel Reeve, who was expected back from the Judith, where he had just established a post. The Crows and Grosventres, with their presents and with copies of the new treaties, got on board and started up the river. The agent for the Blackfeet, George B. Wright, was also on board on his way to Fort Benton.

At the mouth of the Milk River the *Amanda* met Colonel Reeve, who promptly took the boat into his own charge, put the Indians ashore with their presents and other property, and left them to walk home. The anger of the Crows was fired to a desperate pitch by this action. They refused to take the presents, tore up some of the treaties, and sent others back to the Commissioners, and declared that they would henceforth fire upon every boat going up the river. Agent Wright thought the situation too critical for him to attempt to go on overland to Benton, so he returned with the boat and went to his station by way of Omaha, Salt Lake,

and Helena. The Commissioners criticised him severely for this action, and he, on the other hand, charged them with positive misrepresentation in regard to their work. They had already prepared a report setting forth in glowing terms their success in treating with the various tribes. Agent Wright had likewise written a report of his experiences at the mouth of Milk River and the action of the Crows in repudiating the treaties. As the two reports conflicted in important matters the Commission requested, and finally prevailed upon, Agent Wright to modify his report, so as to be in harmony with their own.

After the business was completed at Fort Union the *Ben Johnson* turned her prow downstream and proceeded homeward by leisurely stages, stopping at the various camps, agencies, and military posts. The property remaining on the boat was put off partly at Yankton, partly at Sioux City, and partly at Omaha. At Sioux City it was put off at night. Captain La Barge knew nothing of it. Hearing the noise of unloading he arose and went to see what was going on, and found the crew unloading freight. He asked by whose orders they were doing this, and they replied, those of the Commission. He said no more. It was clearly the intention to conceal this move from him, and again he saw how mercenary

was the patriotism of many of our government officials. The boat pursued her way safely to St. Louis, where she arrived late in August.

Captain La Barge turned over the steamer to her owners and took possession of his new boat, the *Octavia,* brought her to the wharf, finished her construction, and left on her first trip October 1. He ran in the lower river the rest of the season, and then on the Mississippi until ice closed in. He laid up the boat for the winter at Kimmswick, twenty miles below St. Louis.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MURDER OF CAPTAIN SPEAR.

THE voyage of the *Octavia* in the summer of 1867 was one of the most successful and important in all Captain La Barge's career on the river. It was unhappily marred by a most revolting crime, committed on board, but in other respects passed off without any untoward incident. Its narrative will be presented in the Captain's own words.

"Early in the spring of 1867 I started in the Weston and St. Joseph trade, and about April 1 advertised for a trip to Benton. Business on the river seemed rather dull at this time, and people ridiculed me for attempting a trip. But within two weeks my boat was filled; in fact it was the largest trip I ever had up the river. I remember that one morning, about two days prior to our departure, Captain Walker S. Carter, a merchant of St. Louis, who was on the levee, said to me, 'Have you got a trip?' I replied, 'More than I can carry.' 'It is astonishing,' said he. 'Anybody else than you could not have

got half a trip.' 'That shows the value of a reputation,' I replied.

"This trip of the *Octavia* was a very profitable one. The cargo was composed entirely of private freight, Mr. W. M. McPherson having been the successful bidder for government contracts. I had freight for nearly every firm in Helena, besides a good list of passengers, among whom was Green Clay Smith, newly appointed Governor of Montana, and also the Surveyor General for the same Territory, Thomas E. Tutt, now of the Third National of St. Louis, and Robert Donnell, now a New York banker.

"An interesting incident took place just before the departure of the boat in which no less a personage than General Sherman was concerned. Colonel Thomas, Sherman's Quartermaster, had contracted with W. M. McPherson, as I have said, for all the season's business up the Missouri River. The *Octavia* was to leave port on Tuesday, and on the Saturday previous General Smith came on board and said to me, 'Did I not understand you to say that you had no government freight or troops to transport this year?' I answered in the affirmative—that McPherson had the contract, and I would not carry for him. 'Well,' returned General Smith, 'I am just from General Sherman, where I went to apply for an escort. I was told by the General that I would not

need one, for he was going to send a hundred men by the *Octavia* to Camp Cook, near the mouth of the Judith River, under Lieutenant Horrigan.' To confirm his statement he showed me a dispatch that he had just sent to Omaha to have the men all ready, so as not to detain the boat beyond a few minutes. This was a good deal of a surprise to me, as I had had no intimation of such action, and had my boat about full. I told Smith I would go and see Sherman about it, and did so at once. I found the General in his office, and before I could tell him my business he said, 'I know what you want,' and he took down his dispatch book to show me that he had taken all precautions not to cause me any delay. 'But that is not the question, General,' I said; 'I cannot take the troops.' 'Ah! that alters the case. Haven't you room?' I replied that I could probably make room, but understood that this shipment was under the McPherson contract. The General said it was. 'Well then,' I said, 'I will not carry them, for I will not work for McPherson.' The General asked my reasons. 'Because McPherson will not pay enough for the work,' I said. 'He gets a good price from the government, but the poor steamboat man who does the work gets nothing for it. For example, he gets fifty dollars per man to haul the troops to Camp Cook. He will pay me fifteen and pocket thirty-

five, and do no work nor take any risk. I will not work for him on such terms.' 'I think you are perfectly right,' said the General. 'In your place I would do the same thing. But you will carry the troops up for General Sherman?' I replied that I would if he would contract with me individually and directly and pay me the McPherson rates. 'That's fair,' said he, and he called in Thomas and told him to draw up a contract. 'Well,' said Thomas, 'this work is for McPherson to do under our contract with him. If you pay La Barge you will also have to pay McPherson.' Thomas wanted to argue the matter, but Sherman shut him off by saying, 'It's no use, Thomas; you just draw up that contract as I tell you to.' And he did.

"The *Octavia* left St. Louis Tuesday, May 7, 1867, on the most important trip I ever made up the river. There were no incidents of note until the boat reached Omaha, where the troops were taken on board. We also received at this point a passenger in the person of a Captain W. D. Spear, 79th Royal Rifles, an officer of the British Army, on furlough from India. He was on his way to Salt Lake *via* the Missouri River, and was going thence to California. He seemed to be a man of means. This embarkation of the troops and of this officer was the prelude to one of the most distressing tragedies that ever

occurred on the Missouri River. The troops were mostly Irish Fenians, and the Lieutenant in charge was an Irishman, all intensely hostile to the English. This fact may in part explain what subsequently transpired. Spear himself felt doubts for his safety, and one day remarked to me that he would be lucky if he got out of this scrape without accident. I did not know what he meant, for he was a very fearless man, going on shore frequently in spite of danger from the Indians. Just after midnight of the 7th of June, or more precisely about 12.30 A. M. June 8, as Captain Spear and Joseph C. La Barge, my son, were going up the steps to the hurricane deck, Captain Spear being a little ahead, a sentinel, William Barry, stationed near there, fired at Captain Spear, the bullet passing through his head at the base of the brain and killing him instantly. The following day an inquest was held by a committee of the passengers consisting of Thomas E. Tutt, Green Clay Smith, Sam McLean, Richard Leach, T. H. Eastman, Geo. W. McLean, and W. J. McCormick, Secretary. Several of the passengers and crew were sworn and their testimony taken. No motive could be discovered for the deed. The sentinel's orders required him to challenge only parties approaching the boat from the shore, and it was expressly agreed with me, by Lieutenant Horrigan, as a condition of permitting

sentinels to be posted on the hurricane deck, that they should not interfere in any way with the passengers. The finding of the committee was that "the shooting was not in accordance with any instructions given to said sentinel, and that he deserves the most rigid punishment known to the law." There was indeed a strong sentiment among the passengers in favor of lynching him, but the military could easily have prevented it, and everyone believed that he would meet with due punishment in regular order. The sentinel was of course at once relieved from duty and placed under arrest.

"Our trip up the river was a dangerous one, owing to the intense hostility of the Indians, but by taking great precautions no accidents happened. I put off the remains of Captain Spear at Fort Buford to await my return. I asked the commanding officer if he could suggest any way of embalming the body. He advised the construction of a large box and the filling of it with green cottonwood sawdust. The experiment seemed to work well, although I had never heard of such a thing before. The post commander refused to receive the prisoner, who was taken on to Camp Cook. The commanding officer there refused to try him on the ground that the crime had been committed in Dakota. He held him for us to take back to Yankton.

"The troops were left at Camp Cook and the boat went on to Benton. I found many passengers for the down trip and great quantities of golddust. I filled the office safe and every other available receptacle with it. There were no incidents of especial importance on the return trip. The soldier, Barry, was taken down to Yankton and there turned over to the United States marshal, who held him until orders came from Washington for his release, when he was sent back to his company.

"I took Captain Spear's remains back to St. Louis, where I found telegrams directing the shipment of them to Europe. A Lieutenant Terry of Spear's company came to St. Louis to get full particulars of the affair. I was then living with my family on the *Octavia*, and invited him to stay there with me. He did so, and I gave him as full an account as possible of Captain Spear's death. When the news reached England that the assassin had been released without trial, the government promptly took up the matter and I understood that a demand was made upon our government through Minister Thornton for a civil trial of the soldier. This demand was complied with, and the man was tried before Judge Kidder at Vermillion, Dak. Myself and several others went up as witnesses. The evidence seemed to me overwhelmingly against the accused, there being nothing in

his favor except his own statement that he acted in the line of his duty. The jury returned a verdict of not guilty, upon instructions from the judge that the man had simply obeyed his orders. They were given a verdict to sign written out by the judge, and thus the culprit escaped.

"To us who knew the facts, this travesty upon justice seemed the crowning outrage of the whole deplorable affair. Here was as deliberate, cold-blooded, and unprovoked a murder as the annals of crime afford, actuated unquestionably by the national hate of the murderer for the country of the victim. The crime was considered by the passengers as meriting the severest penalty of the law. The pretense that the sentinel acted under orders had not the remotest foundation, or if it had, it only made the officer *particeps criminis*. The final outcome was the grossest miscarriage of justice which even frontier annals afford, and it was unquestionably a justifiable ground for reprisal on the part of the British government. Let those who lament British obduracy in the case of Mrs. Maybrick ponder upon this far more lamentable case of the unavenged death of Captain Spear.

"Upon my return to St. Louis I called upon McCune, who advised me to attend promptly to my obligations for the construction of the boat, which had

now about matured. He offered to help me get them renewed. I told him it was unnecessary, as I should take them all up and clear the debt off. He was greatly surprised and delighted at the success of my trip, which was indeed almost phenomenal. I made a clear profit of forty-five thousand dollars between May 7, the date of leaving St. Louis, and the date of my return. Yet it was a hard trip. The responsibility was very great. I was heavily in debt for my boat. I had on board three hundred passengers and three hundred tons of cargo. The difficulties of Missouri River navigation, the dangers from the Indians, and the many other contingencies of such a trip made it wearing in the extreme. Many boats that had set out weeks before us were passed on the way.* On the trip I was awake the greater part of the time night and day. I kept up all right and stood the strain so long as the excitement was on, but the moment we landed at Benton and I knew the danger was over, I went to sleep and instructed my wife not to awaken me even for meals. I slept almost continuously for twenty-four hours."

*The *Montana Post* is authority for the statement that this voyage of the *Octavia* was the quickest ever made from St. Louis to Fort Benton.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BATTLE WITH THE RAILROADS.

THE great enemy of the Missouri River steamboat was the railroad. The impression now exists that the river has ceased to be a navigable stream. It has ceased to be a navigated stream, but it is as navigable as it ever was. Let it be known that all railroads in its valley will cease running for a period of five years and there will be a thousand boats on the river in less than six months. It is not a change in the stream, but in methods of transportation, that has ruined the commerce of the river.

The struggle between the steamboat and the railroad lasted just about twenty-eight years, or from 1859—when the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad reached St. Joseph, Mo.—to 1887, when the Great Northern reached Helena, Mont. The influence of the railroads had been felt to some extent before this on the lower river. The Missouri Pacific railroad, which parallels the river from St. Louis to Kansas City, was opened to Jefferson City, March 13, 1856, but did not reach Kansas City until ten years later. This road did not have much effect upon the steam-

boat business of the river. Most of the boats ran far beyond the points reached by the road, and would have kept on the river whether the railroad were there or not. Being there, they secured a large part of the freight, even along the line of the railroad.

When the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad reached the Missouri River at St. Joseph in 1859, that town became an important terminus for river commerce connected with the railroad. A line of packets including three boats ran south to Kansas City and north to Sioux City, with an occasional trip to Fort Randall. The first service of Captain La Barge's boat, the *Emilie*, was in this trade, in which he remained for two years.

The next point on the river reached by the railroads was at Council Bluffs and Omaha. On the 15th of March, 1867, the Chicago and Northwestern railroad reached the former place and on March 15, 1872, the Union Pacific bridge was opened across the river. Omaha largely supplanted St. Joseph in the upper river trade, and still further restricted the business from St. Louis.

The Sioux City and Pacific railroad entered Sioux City in 1868 from Missouri Valley, thus connecting with Omaha and Chicago. In 1870 the Illinois Central reached the same place directly across the State. Sioux City became, and for a long time re-

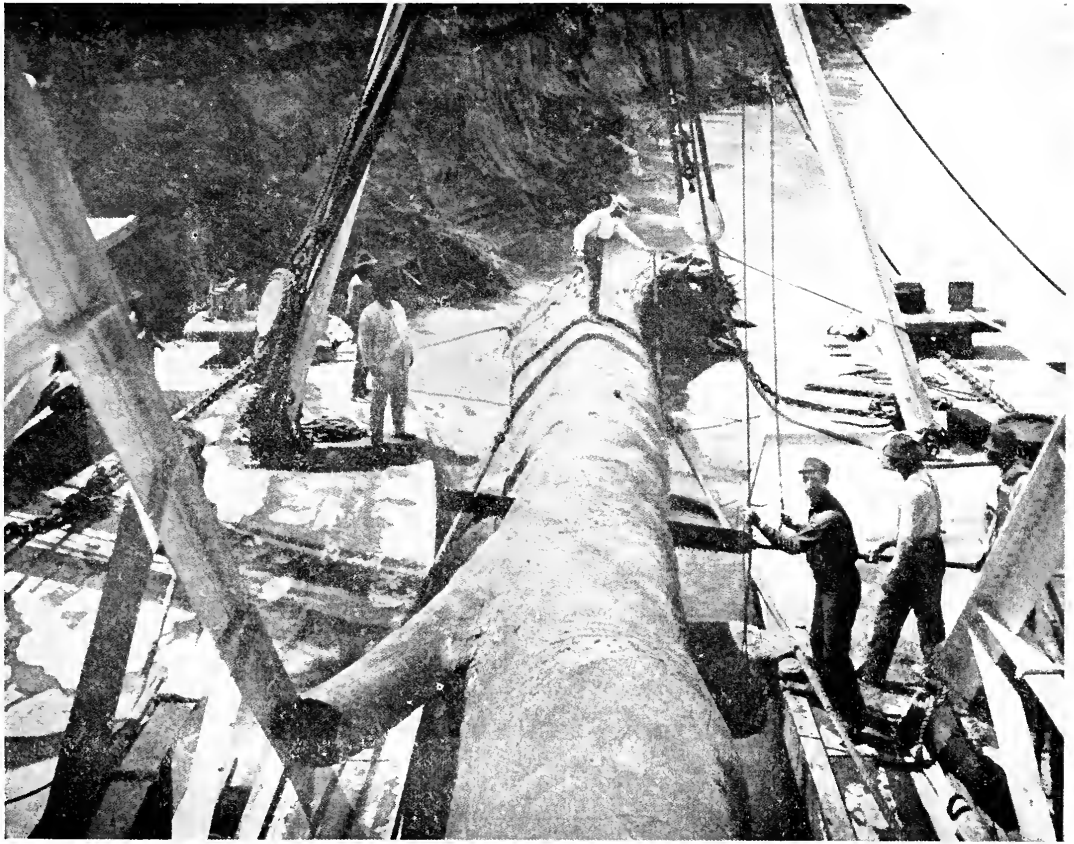
mained, a more important river port than either St. Joseph or Omaha. All during the period of the Indian wars, in the decade from 1870 to 1880 it was the great shipping point for the army in all its work on the upper river. Even the trade to Fort Benton was in great part transferred to this point, and the St. Louis trade with that port suffered another severe falling off.

And now its bold antagonist attacked the steamboat business on every side. The Union Pacific railroad was opened to Ogden in 1869, and a freight line was at once established through to Helena, thus diverting south a large part of the business which had before gone to the river. In 1872 the Northern Pacific reached Bismarck, and cut off nearly all the upper river trade from Sioux City. In 1880 the Utah Northern entered Montana from Ogden and captured a large share of the trade of that Territory. In 1883 the Northern Pacific reached the valley of the Upper Missouri, and virtually controlled all the business that had hitherto gone to the Missouri River except the small proportion which originated at Fort Benton and below to Bismarck. The final blow was delivered to the river trade in 1887, when the Great Northern reached Helena.

This was practically the end of the steamboat business on the Missouri River, and the doom of old Fort

Benton. A new town arose at the Great Falls, under the fostering care of the railroad, absorbed most of the former trade of Fort Benton, and grew into one of the largest towns of the State. Fort Benton dropped rapidly into a condition of decadence from which it has never recovered. In the meanwhile all the regular steamboat owners withdrew from the river except the Benton Transportation Company, which has maintained to the present day a very small fleet of boats at Bismarck, N. D. It was a sad day for the marine insurance companies when the fate of the river commerce was settled by the railroads. Accidents occurred with astonishing certainty whenever it was found that boats were no longer needed; and it was left to the underwriters to close up the final account of this record of disaster.

The last commercial boat that ever arrived at Fort Benton left that port in 1890. The victory of the railroads was complete, and every year since they have extended their lines still further into the valley and along the shores of the river, gradually cutting off the small local trade to points not yet reached by rail. The boat was never able to compete with the locomotive. The river did not run in the right direction. Mile for mile the transportation of freight upon it cost more than by rail. As to passenger traffic —what could forty miles a day do against four hun-



REMOVING SNAGS FROM THE MISSOURI

dred! Nothing but the absolute exclusion of railroads could save the steamboat, and the development of the country made this as undesirable as it was impossible.

In this long and hopeless struggle the steamboats found a strenuous ally in the government of the United States, which cheerfully undertook to alter the course of events and maintain a freight traffic along the river. The history of government improvement work upon the Missouri River is an instructive one. For many years it consisted solely in the removal of snags and obstructions, and to this extent was a great and unquestionable benefit. Of the hundreds of steamboats lost on the river about seventy per cent. were lost from striking snags, and the removal of these obstructions was therefore an obvious step of good policy. Appropriations began to be made for the Missouri River jointly with the Mississippi and the Ohio as early as 1832, but the first actual work seems to have been done in 1838. In that year two snagboats, the *Heliopolis* and the *Archimedes*, ran up the river 325 miles and 385 miles respectively, removing altogether 2245 snags and cutting 1710 overhanging trees from the banks, at a total cost of twenty thousand dollars. In this same year the river was examined as far up as Westport (Kansas City), with a

view of taking up the question of its general improvement. The officer of Engineers who made this examination was Captain Robert E. Lee.

From this time on to 1879 appropriations continued to be made jointly for the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Arkansas rivers, with occasional lapses of one or more years. The work done under these appropriations was exclusively the removal of snags, and was undoubtedly of great value. It was done when the traffic on the river was at its height, and it was therefore applied when and where needed. There can be little doubt that the property saved by this work many times repaid its cost.

In 1879 the government began a general improvement of the river by contracting its channel, so as to produce a greater depth at low water and make navigation possible at all stages. It was a doubtful policy at best, in view of the rapid and inevitable decline of traffic, but this consideration seems only to have increased the determination to keep boats on the river whether the interests of the public required them there or not. The policy was kept up in ever-increasing measure, and in 1884 Congress created a Commission of five members to take the matter in charge and conduct the work in a systematic way. A more fatuitous course has rarely been adopted by any government than this attempt to

reverse the decrees of destiny and accomplish the impossible. Even at that time the fate of Missouri River navigation was to most men as clear as the flash of light in the night. It was dead beyond the hope of resurrection, at least within another century. The desultory traffic which existed here and there would not amount, in the total value of the freight carried, to the appropriations made for facilitating its transportation.

Nevertheless, in face of this inevitable march of events, the problem was taken up in earnest. Millions of dollars were appropriated, a vast accummulation of plant was made, and an astonishing amount of actual work accomplished. The result? So far as its influence upon the commerce of the valley is concerned the same as if this money had been used to build a railroad in Greenland. Not a boat more has followed the river than if the work had not been done. From that point of view it has all been wasted effort. From another viewpoint, however, it has been of great benefit. It has protected many miles of river front, saved from destruction thousands of acres of valuable bottom lands, and millions of property on city fronts and along the lines of railroads. It has developed some of the most effective methods known to engineering for the control of alluvial rivers, and has made a solid contribution to the advancement of

science. From a purely engineering point of view and its great value in the protection of property, the work may be considered a success; from its influence upon the commerce of the country, something very different.

For seventeen years the Missouri River Commission dragged out an unnecessary existence, and was finally abolished by Act of Congress, June 13, 1902. But the lesson, if a costly one, has been well learned. So far as government work on the Missouri River is concerned, it will, in the near future at least, be confined to two purposes. On the lower stretches of the river it will be devoted to the protection of property along the banks; in the upper course to the building of reservoirs and canals, for the utilization of its waters in irrigation.*

Thus the battle between the railroads on the one hand and the steamboats, with their government ally, on the other, has resulted in overwhelming victory for the former. It is a victory not to be regretted. It is in line with progress. The country has passed beyond any use that can come from transportation methods like those of the Missouri River steamboat. It served its purpose and served it well. It filled a great place in the early development of the Western country. But its day has passed, and henceforth it will be of interest only to lovers of history.

*See footnote at end of chapter xxxviii.

"IMPROVING" THE MISSOURI RIVER

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LAST VOYAGES TO BENTON.

As soon as the ice broke up in the spring of 1868 Captain La Barge commenced work on the river, and after two trips to St. Joseph advertised for a trip to Benton. He received a good cargo and had a fairly profitable voyage, but in no sense so satisfactory as the year before. After his return in the fall to St. Louis he received a proposition for the charter of the boat in the government river work. Terms were arranged with General McComb of Cincinnati, through Captain Charles R. Suter, who was later for many years in charge of the government work on the Missouri River. Captain La Barge remained on the boat, working for the government. during the rest of the season, when he sold the boat to the Engineer Department for $40,000.

"And here," said the Captain, "I have to record another of the great mistakes of my life. I was now well 'fixed,' as the world goes. I had the $40,000 which I had received for my boat. I had about $50,000 in the bank. My home, forty acres in Cabanné place, was easily worth $40,000 even at that

time; and I was entirely out of debt. I had thought much of retiring from the river and ought to have done so. It was only too evident that the steamboat business on the Missouri had seen its day. It had passed its meridian in the middle of the sixties, and henceforth it was sure to decline. The reluctance of an active man, still in the prime of life (I was fifty-three), to lay aside the pursuits of a thrifty career, may have blinded my eyes to the certain and early fate of the business I had been engaged in, and have led me to hope that it would continue to be what it had been in the past. I had no desire to go on any other river. The Missouri was my home. I had grown up on it from childhood. I liked it, and knew I could not feel at home on any other.

"And so I unwisely concluded to continue at my old business, and went into it on a larger scale than ever before. I built the *Emilie La Barge*, a larger and finer boat even than the *Octavia*, costing me $60,000. The hull was built on the Ohio and brought to St. Louis for completion. This was in the winter of 1868-69."

Government business up the river was still very good, but competition for it was getting closer, as other lines of steamboat trade declined, and Captain La Barge failed to secure a contract. He went to work, however, for the successful bidder and did a

paying business during the summer. He returned to St. Louis in September and made two trips to New Orleans, when the boat was laid up until the spring of 1870. He then entered into a contract with the government to transport Colonel Gilbert and 480 men with over 400 tons of freight to Fort Buford. It was a low-water season and the trip was slow and tedious; but the boat got through all right. After his return Captain La Barge ran in the lower river the balance of the season. But the profits were small, for the railroads had thoroughly gotten the upper hand. There was no longer any money in the lower river trade.

"I recall a little incident that amused me somewhat while on this summer's trip," said the Captain. "Colonel Gilbert was a strict disciplinarian, yet withal much liked by his men. When he came on board he told me that I need not close the bar on the boat unless I chose to do so. If any of his men wanted a drink and had money to pay for it, let them have it. 'That's something very unusual,' said I, for generally when troops were in transport I had to close the bar. 'All right, I'll take my chances,' he replied. 'If any of them get drunk, they will not get drunk again.' I noted throughout the trip that there was not a single drunken soldier, although the bar was open all the time.

"It was customary whenever we stopped to have a guard posted near the gangway, and this was done on our arrival at Fort Randall. A guard from the post was also ordered down, presumably to prevent the post soldiers from getting on the boat. The young lieutenant in charge made his way on board past Colonel Gilbert's guard, on telling who he was. He inquired of me for Colonel Gilbert, and I took him up and introduced him. After a few minutes' conversation he noticed the open bar on the boat and some soldiers there, drinking. He said to Colonel Gilbert that he would like to have the bar closed, as such were his orders. 'Why don't you have it closed, then?' said Colonel Gilbert bluntly. 'Well, I don't like to order it when you are aboard with troops.' 'It suits me to have it open,' returned the Colonel. The lieutenant explained that they were afraid that some of the post soldiers would get aboard and get drunk. 'You have a guard out there, haven't you?' asked the Colonel. 'Yes, sir.' 'Well, if they get past your guard they won't mine,' and he turned and walked off, leaving the lieutenant quite crestfallen at the encounter.

"It was while we were here at Randall that I was subpœnaed by a United States marshal to appear at the trial of the murderer of Captain Spear. I had the greatest difficulty in getting permission to con-

tinue my trip, although the trial was not to come off for several months. I had to give $20,000 bonds for my appearance.

"After my return to St. Louis that fall I made several Mississippi River trips and laid the boat up late in the season. In the summer of 1871 I ran in what is called the Omaha line all the season. In the fall I sold the boat for $30,000. She had paid me just about what she cost. I remained at home all the winter of 1871-72, when I again got tired of doing nothing; and being bred to the steamboat business, and not daring to turn my hand to anything else, commenced building another boat. She was completed by the middle of the summer, and named *De Smet*, in honor of the distinguished Jesuit missionary. I at once took a contract to transport freight from St. Louis to Shreveport, La., for the construction of the Southern Pacific railroad. This enterprise was disastrous in the extreme. I found the Red River without water enough at the mouth for me to enter, all of it going down the Bayou Atchafalaya. I did not get away from there until January, having had to import one hundred mules at my own expense to get the freight through. The enterprise was so disastrous that I was released from the contract. I secured fifteen hundred bales of cotton for my return trip to St. Louis, but the winter

was severe and I was stopped by ice at Helena, Ark., and had to send the freight on by rail. Take it all in all, the season's venture was a most ruinous one."

While engaged in this work Captain La Barge found it necessary to run down to New Orleans with his boat. He went to transact some business with Jesse K. Bell, a man closely connected with Mississippi River business and a capitalist well known throughout the valley. While in his office someone came in and asked to see Dave McCann. "What McCann is that?" asked La Barge. "Dave McCann." "Dave McCann?" "Yes. Do you know him?" "I used to know a Dave McCann over forty years ago." "Well, I guess it's the same man. Let's see if he knows you," and Bell sent his servant to call McCann in. When La Barge was on the *Warrior* during the Blackhawk war in 1832 McCann was second engineer on the boat. The two young men became intimately acquainted and very fond of each other. They were together for a time during the cholera scourge and promised to take care of each other if either were taken sick. Finally their ways parted and neither had seen or heard of the other since. McCann quickly appeared in Mr. Bell's office and glanced at where La Barge was sitting. "Well, if here isn't Joe La Barge!" he exclaimed, grasping his old associate by the hand. "And if this isn't

Dave McCann!" was the Captain's warm rejoinder. McCann was at the time president of the Cotton Compress Company and of the New Orleans Foundry Company.

Captain La Barge did not reach St. Louis until February, 1873. He remained there for a while and made a second, and this time profitable, trip to Shreveport. He then advertised for Benton, secured a good cargo, and made a successful trip.

"An incident occurred on this voyage at Fort Rice," said the Captain, "which illustrates some traits of General Custer's military character. Custer was daily expected to arrive opposite Fort Rice, and General Stanley, who was commanding there, wanted me to delay a day or two and ferry him over. I made an arrangement with him to do this, and when Custer arrived I crossed the river with an order from Stanley to bring him over. I cleared the deck of the *De Smet* entirely, and rigged stages so that the horses and wagons could be driven directly on board. As the command approached, I saw an officer come riding down, clad in buckskin trousers from the seams of which a large fringe was fluttering, red-topped boots, broad sombrero, large gauntlets, flowing hair, and mounted on a spirited animal. I had never seen Custer, but of course had heard a great deal of him, and there was no mistak-

ing this picture. I went out on the bank to meet him. He stopped his horse, but did not get off. I said, 'General Custer, I suppose?' He nodded assent. I showed him my order for the transportation of the command and told him that if he would have the wagons brought down I would see to their proper disposition on the boat. 'Stand aside, sir,' he replied; 'my wagon-master will take charge of the boat and see to ferrying the command over.' 'Not if I know myself,' I replied, and started for the boat. Custer sent for a guard to arrest me, but I took time by the forelock, drew in the stage, and steamed across the river and reported to General Stanley. Stanley immediately sent me back with an officer and guard, who arrested Custer and brought him to his headquarters.

"Custer seemed to me to be generally unpopular, that is, I rarely heard him well spoken of. Stanley, on the other hand, always appeared to be a gentleman of rare qualities, one who never forgot to treat a civilian as a man—something that many officers were little disposed to do."

While at Benton awaiting passengers for a return trip Captain La Barge had some new experiences of the character of men who were delegated by the government to do its business with the Indians. He was one day arrested by Mr. C. D. Hard, deputy U.

S. marshal, sub-Indian agent, and special Indian detective at this point, on charge of selling and trading whisky on Indian reservations. The second day afterward Captain La Barge was brought up for examination, but not being allowed to introduce any evidence in his own behalf, made no effort to clear himself. The agent then seized his boat in the following words: "I seize the boat as sub-Indian agent, and turn her over to myself as deputy marshal for safe keeping." Being requested to produce papers for such a proceeding, he replied that verbal seizure was sufficient for him, and others would have to accommodate themselves accordingly. He immediately placed a fellow criminal over the boat and applied to Captain Kirtland, the military officer in charge, for a squad of soldiers to aid him in his rascality. This request was peremptorily refused. Hard became very insolent and abusive after the seizure, and it was soon evident that the object of himself and his confederates was to levy blackmail upon the Captain. Being determined to defeat this outrageous scheme, he left for Helena to consult legal authorities.

When Captain La Barge reached Helena he had no difficulty in securing a telegraphic order from Chief Justice Wade, of the Territory, directing the release of the boat, and he returned to Benton and

resumed possession of her, much to the chagrin of the authors of this high-handed proceeding. This virtuous public officer had endeavored to work a similar game on another boat the same season, but was defeated by some of the passengers.

The boat had been detained by this incident upward of two weeks, and it was not until the middle of July that she set out on her return trip. Among the passengers was the family of Colonel Wilbur F. Sanders, already known in these pages as counsel for the plaintiffs in the case against La Barge, Harkness & Co. The Captain and he were always on good terms, however, and their former relations had nothing to do with their subsequent friendship.

On the way up the river this season two Catholic Sisters came on board on a begging visit in the interest of the Chicopee Mission in Minnesota. The Captain gave them passage to Benton and back. They visited Helena and Virginia City, and were very successful. They came back from Helena with the Sanders family and returned to Sioux City. About a month later Captain La Barge received by express a beautiful specimen of needlework handsomely framed, representing St. Joseph. It is still in the possession of the La Barge family.

After Captain La Barge's return to St. Louis he entered the Alton trade, and made daily trips in op-

position to the Eagle Packet Company. He entered the same trade again in 1874 under an arrangement with John S. McCune, who had long controlled the trade on this part of the river. But in March of this year, while Mr. McCune was in Jefferson City to settle some details in regard to the sale of lands constituting the present Forest Park of the City of St. Louis, he was taken sick with pneumonia and died one day after his return to St. Louis. This broke up all the Captain's plans, and as he was not able, unaided, to compete with the Eagle Packet Company, he sold his boat to them.

Captain La Barge spent the remainder of the season in St. Louis, and in the fall commenced building a new boat, which he christened the *John M. Chambers*, in honor of the infant son of B. M. Chambers, President of the Butchers' and Drovers' Bank. The boat was ready for use in the spring of 1877. Captain La Barge made a trip as far as to Fort Rice, loaded mainly with quartermaster stores. He then entered the Yankton trade, that being at the time an important terminus for the declining river business. Certain defects in the boat's machinery, which could not be remedied at Yankton, compelled an early return to St. Louis and the loss of some important work. Captain La Barge remained in St. Louis until the following spring. He then returned to Yankton

under a government contract to transport goods from that point. He finished this work early, but had scarcely returned to St. Louis when he was called upon to go up the river again, as we have elsewhere related, for service in the Custer campaign.

In 1877 La Barge took the *Chambers* as far up the Missouri as to the mouth of the Yellowstone, and up the latter stream to the mouth of Tongue River. In the following year he made a trip to Benton, arriving there on the 4th day of June. This is believed to have been the last commercial trip from St. Louis to Fort Benton. Upon his return to St. Louis he sold his boat and retired permanently from the business of boat owner and builder. He served as pilot on the lower river during the summer of 1879, and then finally withdrew from connection with commercial boating on the Missouri.

From 1880 to 1885 Captain La Barge was in the service of the government as pilot of the steamer *Missouri*, which was then engaged in making a survey of the river valley. This duty was little enough like the active business of his better days. It was filled with reminiscences of his past career which could not but bring regretful reflections. His intimate knowledge of the river was of great help in recovering the proper geographical nomenclature of the valley, and might have been of far greater value had the sur-

veyor under whose charge he worked possessed an ordinary appreciation of the mine of knowledge which lay at his disposal. In 1885 the boat was taken from St. Louis to Fort Benton, this being the very last through trip ever made. The year 1885 closed Captain La Barge's career on the Missouri River, and he took his hand from the wheel after a record of service unequaled by any other pilot in its history. Three years more than half a century had elapsed since he made his first voyage up the river.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DECLINING YEARS.

It is a sad reflection that, after a life of hard and useful work and the prominent part he took in upbuilding the great West, Captain La Barge should have closed his career in comparative want. But such were the vicissitudes of the business to which his life had been devoted. That business had passed away, and like a sinking ship it dragged down all who clung to it. Captain La Barge struggled bravely against these adverse conditions, but it was impossible to withstand the downward tendency.

From 1890 to 1894 Captain La Barge held a position under the city government of St. Louis. His very last remunerative work of any kind was for the United States Government, under the direction of the author of this work, whom he helped compile a list of the steamboat wrecks which have occurred on the Missouri River. This work was done in the year 1897, and was published as a part of the report of the Missouri River Commission for that year. Although the number of these wrecks lacks but five of three hun-

STEAMBOAT WRECK ON THE MISSOURI RIVER

dred, the Captain's memory embraced them nearly all, and most of them with great accuracy of detail.

Truly a mournful task was this to the veteran pilot. What reminiscences of a strange and wonderful past did it bring to mind! He lived over again his river life of fifty years, saw the old keelboat, the mackinaw, and the canoe, dodged again the bullets of the treacherous savages, killed the wild buffalo, sparred his boat over sandbars or warped it up the rapids, beheld again the wild rush to the gold fields, heard the tramp of the army going to battle on the plains, and mused upon a thousand other features of a life that existed no more. And as he recalled one by one these wrecks of a once flourishing business, he could not but reflect that the greatest wreck of all was the business itself. It was gone—buried so deep in the sands of commercial competition that not even the pennant staff or smokestack caused a ripple on the surface—passengers, cargo, and all that clung to her a total loss.

Captain La Barge survived most of his associates in the river business, and in his later years was frequently consulted by those who had occasion to recover facts concerning the early history of the river. He lived only about two years after the completion of his work for the government. He had grown visibly feebler during this time, and it was apparent to those who knew him that the end of his life was near. It

came at last, however, quite unexpectedly. He was taken suddenly ill on the 2d of April, 1899, and at 3 P. M. of the following day breathed his last.

The funeral of Captain La Barge was from the St. Xavier Cathedral in St. Louis, and was largely attended. The Jesuits were under a deep debt of gratitude to the Captain, who, throughout his career, had extended to their missionaries the freedom of his boats. Through mistaken information they had often credited this generosity to the American Fur Company, for which Captain La Barge worked so much. Upon discovering their error they made due acknowledgment of it, and upon this occasion made a particular point to correct it and to acknowledge their lasting debt to the great pilot. It was probably in line with this purpose that the Church paid to the deceased its very highest honors. On Thursday morning, April 6, solemn high mass was celebrated at the Cathedral for the repose of the soul. Archbishop Kain, assisted by eight priests, officiated at the mass. Six grandsons of the deceased acted as pall bearers. Father Walter H. Hill, a lifelong friend of Captain La Barge, preached the funeral sermon. In the course of his remarks he said: "Captain La Barge led an honorable life. In the eyes of the Church to which he belonged he led a good life. There was no stigma upon his name. No vice marred his character to bring the blush of shame

to his children. His life was an example of which they might well be proud."

The speaker drew an interesting picture of the changes that had taken place in the city of St. Louis and in the great West within the span of this man's life. In his infancy he had actually been in peril from the Indians in what are now the outskirts of the city. Then luxury and plenty, as we now know them, had no existence. The mother cared for her children and did the work of the house. The candle and not the incandescent furnished light at night. Water was pumped from the well and people did not ride to and from their business in swift electric cars. In the words of a local paper, commenting upon the Captain's career, "He passed through all the gradations and progressive steps of the century until in its very last year the sun of his life set forever, and his expiring gaze beheld a little village grown to a great metropolis, enmeshed in a perfect tangle of railways, factories, and furnaces, teeming with busy activity, converting the crude material into every possible contrivance imaginable for the use of man; palatial mansions where, in his youth, was a wilderness; in short, every improvement that the brain of man had wrought."

Father Hill illustrated this marvelous growth by a reference to the growth of his own Church in St. Louis: "As I stand here to-day," he said, "to pay the

last sad tribute of respect to the memory of the friend of my early youth, I cannot help thinking of the marvelous changes that have been wrought in the last eighty-four years. On the evening of October 22, 1815, a mother entered a little frame church on the banks of the Mississippi, bearing an infant in her arms. The parent had come to have the child baptized. Tallow candles lighted her way through the aisle to the rude altar where the ceremony was to be performed. To-day the remains of that babe, grown to manhood's estate and full of years, lie before me. The spirit now dwells in his Father's house. At the christening were only the most primitive conveniences; at the burial services his remains rest in a magnificent granite structure; hundreds of electric lights glare upon the dead; hundreds of heads are bowed in silent prayer. Which of us can ponder for an instant upon the span of this life and not be bewildered at the contemplation?"

Captain La Barge was buried in the beautiful Calvary Cemetery, which lies adjacent to the even more beautiful Bellefontaine Cemetery in the northern part of the City of St. Louis. His grave is within a short distance of where he spent his earliest infancy, and is in all respects a peculiarly appropriate resting place after a life like his. To the eastward, in full view where not cut off by the foliage, flows the mighty Miss-

issippi. To the northward the impetuous Missouri brings down its flood from the dim and shadowy distance. How often had this individual guided his intrepid bark up the channels of these two streams, headed for remote and almost unknown ports, and anon, gliding swiftly on his homeward journey, sped eastward into the Mississippi and south to the port to which he always returned. Standing by his grave and overlooking the valleys of these streams, their history through the past two centuries thrills the mind like a romance of the past.

In personal appearance Captain La Barge was one of the most distinguished-looking men of the West in his time. He stood five feet ten, was well proportioned, weighed about 180 pounds, was erect, muscular, and alert, with a sharp, quick eye and a quiet energy in all his movements. He always wore a beard after reaching manhood's estate, and in later years bore a striking resemblance to General Grant. Colonel Thomas of the army, long stationed in St. Louis, always addressed him by the name, Grant; and only a few years before his death a gentleman met him on the street and said, " Well, if I did not know Grant is dead, I should say there he comes."

Captain La Barge's manner in social intercourse was mild and agreeable, and his accent pleasant to a degree. It was a satisfaction to hear him talk. Al-

though almost invariably soft and unobtrusive, his voice would occasionally swell, under the influence of emotion, until it possessed all the power of command. It is said that this characteristic marked his entire career. His men were not deceived by it. They never dared to take undue advantage of the sunshine of his manner, lest they call down upon them the thunder of the tempest.

Captain La Barge was a lifelong, consistent Catholic in religion, and in politics a lifelong, consistent Democrat.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DESTINY OF THE MISSOURI RIVER.

WHAT of the future? Is the useful purpose of the Missouri River in the up-building of the West already fulfilled? Is its great history a closed book? Such, it must be admitted, is the general view. In popular estimation that river to-day is little more than a vast sewer, whose seething, eddying waters bear down the sands and clay and débris from the far upper country, scattering them along its course, swelling the floods of the Mississippi, and pushing ever seaward the delta of that mighty stream. To the railroads it is a million-dollar obstacle wherever they want to cross it. As a competitive route of commerce it has sunk beneath their notice. To the husbandman along its borders it is a perpetual nightmare, for he knows not what morning he may awake to find his worldly possessions ruthlessly swept away. From all points of view it now seems like one of those things in the economy of nature which could be dispensed with and the world be none the worse for its absence.

Nevertheless the river is still there—a fact, a thing to be reckoned with in some way or other. It will not

let its presence be forgotten. In its old-time fashion it carves up the lands, but with vastly greater destructiveness now that they have become so valuable. Its terrible ice gorges pile up as of yore, but are now more dreaded than they used to be on account of the property along the banks. In other respects as well it is the same peculiar stream that it has ever been. The weird sandstorms drive over its illimitable bars, the willows bend to the blast, and the swift-rolling waters are lashed into foam by the prairie gale. In periods of calm its silvery sheen stretches away under the morning and evening sun as when the pilot followed its interminable windings through the prairies; and its resistless tide rushes on, as in the blithe steamboat days, when it carried upon its bosom the commerce of the valley.

But here the likeness between the past and present ends. No aboriginal savage now roams upon its borders. The buffalo does not come to its shore to quench his thirst, or to swim its current, or to cross upon its ice. The lonely dwellers of the valley have long since ceased to watch the eastern horizon where the river runs into the sky, for the curling smoke no longer tells them of the approach of those white-winged messengers of civilization, the Missouri River steamboats. They are gone, its greatness and glory, never, in their ancient form, to return.

But the river itself is still there, and those who dwell on its shores refuse to believe that its power for good has passed away. For years they have wistfully looked upon its waters, flowing by in absolute waste, and then upon the rich lands on either side, parching in a rainless climate. A vague hope of what the river *may* be already possesses their minds. Does it not hold the secret germ of a mighty future empire? Twenty-five millions of people these wasted waters could sustain, if only they could be scattered upon the neighboring lands. With great canals to divert them from the river, with great reservoirs to keep them from going to waste, there would follow the necessary millions of money and men to turn them to proper account.

This is the dream. Can it be realized, or must it always remain nothing more than a dream? It is an engineering problem purely. The grand desideratum would be that everywhere, whether upon the main stream or its tributaries, the water could be saved and used in irrigation. But the obstacles in the way of so complete a result seem at present almost insurmountable. The higher tributaries can doubtless all be utilized, but the main streams, in their lower courses, have so little fall that it will be very difficult to build canals of sufficient length to get the water upon the higher ground. Whether the water will ever have a

value that will justify pumping it to the necessary elevation it would be unwise at present to hazard a conjecture. But even if not more than half can be utilized, it will still be enough to maintain a population equal to that at present existing in the entire arid region of the West.

Here, then, is the answer to our question—What of the future? Turn this river out upon the lands. Unlock its imprisoned power. Where the rains do not fall let it supply the need. Then the new and greater history of the Missouri River will begin. Utility will take the place of romance. The buffalo, the Indian, the steamboat, the gold-seeker, the soldier, will be seen in its valley no more, but in their stead the culture and comfort, and the thousand blessings that come with civilization. Such, let us hope, in drawing the curtain over a mighty past, will be the consummation of a still more mighty future.*

*On the 13th of June, 1902, Congress passed an Act abolishing the Missouri River Commission, and virtually abandoning the river as a commercial highway.

On the 17th of the same month it passed an act inaugurating a government policy of reclamation of the arid lands. This policy will eventually result in an extensive use of the waters of the Missouri in irrigation.

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